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ABSTRACT

This little book contains eight stories of school reform and leadership by eight public-school principals. Each principal leads a school that is a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools. The principals' stories are highly personal, often focusing more on the individual principal than on the reforms they brought about. Nevertheless, through the literary device of personal history, the authors provide solid lessons on leadership, which is the purpose of this exercise. This book is meant to be a guide--based on the experiences of successful change agents--on leadership for public-school administrators. The principals/authors describe the challenges facing them and their school and detail the steps they took to bring about meaningful change. Along the way, they recount their personal journeys to positions of leadership and share their values, feelings, and beliefs on educational reform and school leadership. In the process, the principals/authors provide many practical tips on instructional leadership and cover such topics as effective communication; building teams and consensus; developing outcomes; creating a vision for the school; working with parents and the community; getting teachers to "buy in" to the change process; and prioritizing problems and tasks. (WFA)

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LEADING CHANGE

PRINCIPALS' STORIES OF SCHOOL REFORM

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LEADING CHANGE

PRINCIPALS' STORIES OF SCHOOL REFORM

Thomson Fellows
Class of 1993

COALITION OF ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS

About This Volume

The idea for this volume grew out of an informal conversation between Coalition of Essential Schools chairman Ted Sizer and a group of Thomson Fellows at the 1993 Fall Forum. As the Fellows shared their stories about the trials and triumphs of leading change efforts in Essential schools, Ted suggested that they would be worth sharing with a broad audience interested in the leadership of change. Brian Howard, whose own story leads off this volume, took up the suggestion and collected from his colleagues the work that appears here. This volume would still be no more than a good idea were it not for Brian's determination and commitment to make it a reality.

Paula Evans, Director of Professional Development for the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, was also instrumental in bringing this work to fruition. Stan Thompson, principal of Rogers High School in Newport, Rhode Island, and Charles Patteson, principal of Chapel Hill High School in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, reviewed the stories and offered valuable comments. Stan also kindly agreed to write an introduction to them.

Editor: Susan Fisher *Editorial Associates:* Ann C. Landenberger and Jane Myers

About the Thomson Fellows of the Coalition of Essential Schools

The Thomson Fellows program began in 1988, with funding from the Danforth Foundation. The purpose of the program was twofold: to recognize principals in the Essential Schools network who had demonstrated transformative leadership in their schools, and to support them in the roles of spokesperson for Essential School change and mentor to others who were engaged in it. The program was named in honor of Scott Thomson, who had recently retired after long and exemplary service as executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Over the course of the program, thirty-five principals were selected and given opportunities to further develop and share their leadership skills. Thomson Fellows are one segment of a nationwide "faculty" of more than two hundred Essential School teachers, principals, district superintendents, and community school leaders who continue to work with hundreds of schools that are redesigning their programs and practices to improve learning for all their students.

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INTRODUCTION

The stories that we have been told in the past and many of the images created by Hollywood would lead us to believe that leadership is an extraordinary quality that only a few are capable of harnessing and expressing in an anxious world. What I have seen, however, as a former Senior Associate with the Coalition of Essential Schools and now, more intensely, as principal of a traditional comprehensive high school is that leadership is for the ordinary who have the will to keep learning and growing in the face of hostility, limited resources, fickle publics, and lack of trust and communication in an ever-expanding community. Its potency is dependent upon those individuals who are willing to create stories whose images, ideas, and language allow an audience to appreciate their personal struggles, knowledge, and need for support as they strive to help others discover who they are and what they must become if they are to bring out the best in those around them.

The stories in this volume offer a privileged glimpse through the eyes of eight Essential school principals at what happens when personal change and discovery confront schoolwide change and community doubts in light of innovation. In these personal stories we see the growing pains of leadership, the evolution of reform as it expands beyond one person to become a community product, the constant rethinking and reshaping of the role of leader, and the attempt to communicate vision to others who question the school's overall mission.

Through these stories one will quickly discern that there are no quick fixes for school and community ills nor shortcuts to the character demonstrated by these school leaders. One will also observe that although inspiration comes from some of these recorded experiences, this is more serendipitous than intentional. What is explicit in this portfolio of principal leadership is one very powerful lesson: Reflecting on who we are as leaders gives us some semblance of strength to nurture, prod, and confront our diverse and often divided communities.

Stan Thompson, Principal
Rogers High School, Newport, Rhode Island
January 1996

I

THE ANATOMY OF REFORM

Brian F. Howard
Chatham High School, Chatham, New York

July 27, 1987 was my first day as principal of Chatham High School. After driving into the parking lot, I stood staring at the front doors wondering how I would change the school and how it would change me. Before applying, I had done some research on the district. The high school had an enrollment of five hundred students in grades nine through twelve. The program was the standard type found in nearly every high school in the country. Students were sorted and labeled by a tracking system that was among the most extreme I had ever encountered. Chatham is a community made up of both individuals who had lived in the area for generations and a new wave of residents, most of whom have come from the metropolitan New York City area. The long-time residents often look with suspicion at the newcomers. As in most small communities, too, the school is the center of social life and it is also the central topic of gossip. Many of the conversations in the community about the school are based on false or distorted information or on personal grudges, yet most of the community is supportive. The high school receives the greatest amount of attention from the local press, inside conversations at the grocery store, and at backyard gatherings.

The two things that concerned me most when I first arrived were the extreme tracking system that defined the "haves" and "have nots," and the challenge of communicating with a community so that conversations about the school were based on what actually happened in the school.

Models from the Past: Real School

I brought with me to this job my own experience, beginning with elementary school at Bloomingdale Union School in New York. Built in 1915, Bloomingdale was a wooden structure, two stories high, perched on a hill with the traditional white flag pole in front. There were two sets of swings and a merry-go-round next to a teeter-totter, all of which surrounded a ball field. The field had bases of large rock, and home

plate was the outcropping of a boulder. From the bell tower looking down, one would see the school as the center of a wheel with a sidewalk and crooked dirt paths coming from seven directions forming the spokes. All paths led to the front steps. These few steps led to the three wooden columns, a stoop, and then the front doors of heavy glass and wood. They were brown like the trim on the white building.

Once you were through the doors you could go up or down stairs. To the left and down was the library, boys room, and boiler room. To the right and down was a room with tables for the few who did not go home for lunch, and there was a girls room. Upstairs was a lobby with worn wooden floors and a drinking fountain. Off the lobby were three classrooms. On the left was Mrs. Fletcher and her room of first- and second-graders. To the right was Mrs. Chambers and her third- and fourth-graders. Mr. Healy and the fifth- and sixth-graders were in the room straight across the lobby. There was a third floor where only Mrs. Perrin, the custodian, was allowed. It used to be for high school students, but before my time it was closed and all seventh- through twelfth-graders were sent to Saranac Lake to attend high school.

In September 1960 I was in sixth grade. It was nearing 3:30 p.m. on the first day of school when my best friend, Jimmy Lawless, a seventh-grader, was spotted through the window climbing the big pine tree next to the baseball field. Even from a distance I could see his freckles, which matched the color of his brown brush-cut hair and short-sleeved brown and white striped shirt. I knew he was waiting for me. Finally the clock moved to 3:30, and Mr. Healy sent us to the coat room. Nobody brought a coat, but I guess he wanted us to get into the routine. We marched out, stood by our desks, and waited for formal dismissal. Mr. Healy sauntered to the front of the class and announced that we would be leaving by the fire exit, which was a door on the side of the room leading to a brown platform and stairs directly to the big pine tree. However, we were to walk slowly out the door in an orderly fashion. We sixth-graders went first, and I was the first person in the row nearest the exit. I walked to the door, opened it, and, when Mr. Healy turned to motion the next row, I—in a not-so-orderly manner—ran to meet my best friend.

Jimmy was busting to tell me about his first day in high school as a seventh-grader. He even spit out the last piece of his Bit-o-Honey bar so he could launch into his story. "Geez, McGinty [one of my nicknames given me by my father], you would not believe it. It ain't like real school. You have lots of teachers. One for each thing. You go to lots of rooms and a buzzer tells you when to move. There ain't a coatroom.

Geez, it ain't like school! You do a little bit in every room and move on. There is not really any work." I surprised Jimmy with my response. "I thought my brother and sisters were lying to me. Just trying to scare me. It really is like that, eh?" Jimmy just gave me a look of older wisdom.

In Bloomingdale Union School the bell in the tower sounded at 8:00 a.m., and each school day started with the Pledge of Allegiance. For the next several hours until recess, one was a working scholar. Recess often depended on the weather and, if you were in Mr. Healy's room, on whether he needed a cigarette break. Most often one grade or the other began the day by continuing on a project from the previous day while the teacher worked with the other students. We learned to work alone and in groups for long periods of time. Students helped students. There were only ten to twelve students per grade level, and they knew that several times every day the teacher would be sitting beside them, asking questions, guiding, and directing. We, the students, felt safe and part of the school. We were the school. There were no subjects, just studies, topics, and learning. Students at Bloomingdale Union School defined school on the basis of this experience. Jimmy Lawless was in culture shock. The high school just could not be school as he knew it; instead, it was something else.

Seven years later at my graduation I sat with some of my classmates and we talked about high school: it was a stark contrast to Bloomingdale Union School. Now school was a series of rooms, a series of subjects, a series of forty-five-minute periods, a series of paper-and-pencil memory tests, and a series of sessions where students sit passively, sometimes listening and sometimes tuning out. It was an institution where one would meet and socialize. It was an institution with a sports program. It was an institution that preceded college, the work force, or the military. That was school.

At the ceremony, Moose Willette, a fellow Bloomingdale Union alumnus, asked if we were educated. We momentarily stopped talking because we had described schooling, but not education. Soon people were chiming in with statements of why we were educated. One of the more serious members tried to explain that we were educated because of averages, courses taken, and things like SAT scores. I asked him to explain what those scores meant and how they demonstrated that we were educated. The discussion stopped, and we lined up to march out for our graduation ceremony. This was the first of many times that I found that people cannot describe in detail what it means to be educated.

On Being Educated

After thirteen years in elementary and secondary school, eight years of college with a doctoral degree, seven years as a teacher, and fourteen years as a building administrator, coupled with experience in four districts, I still have not found a commonly accepted detailed definition of "being educated." Some individuals can parade out long, detailed lists of goals, objectives, and learning outcomes. There are course descriptions and curricula; state education departments have syllabi and recommended textbooks; there is a plethora of test scores and failure/passing rates—lots of gibberish. Some individuals will tell you if it is good news or bad news. There are very, very few who can tell you what a test actually measures beyond something general, like "math." I believe it is odd and frightening that members of a community—students, teachers, and others—cannot describe in great detail what a person will have to know and do in order to demonstrate that he or she is educated.

There are two reasons for this. First, most Americans like to attach a number to things and want measures that are simple symbols like SAT scores or numerical grades. These simple symbols with numbers attached are just accepted to be meaningful. This forces schools to focus on measuring things that are easily measured and represented by a symbol. Second, each individual has his or her own belief of what it means to be educated and what should happen in a school. Much of that has nothing to do with learning to use one's mind well. These individuals' beliefs are challenged by any effort to develop a common description of what a person would have to demonstrate he or she knows and is able to do in order to prove he or she is educated.

Early in my career I discovered one necessary ingredient of a description of being educated: In 1973, I was completing my second year as a middle school teacher when the principal asked me to introduce a new course the next year designed around the practices of Jerome Bruner called "Man: A Course of Study." There were to be a six-week training session during the summer and weekly meetings during the school year.

I decided to accept the offer because it interested me and I was nontenured. As it turned out, it was the best experience of my teaching career. For six weeks I was a student worker learning to use my mind well. With the instructors and classmates I wrestled with questions, formulated questions, and looked for an-

swers by gathering information. We criticized, wrote, read, sorted, critiqued, presented, defended, compared, and contrasted. We practiced being students, and I was finally beginning to discover what being educated meant. One part of the definition had to be learning how to learn. This meant practicing the skills needed to learn so that thinking, communicating, and other habits of mind could be formed and embedded. We also learned how to demonstrate these habits of mind. During the six weeks, we showed and explained to each other, the instructors, and guests what we were doing, why we were doing it, and why it was important. This experience became an integral part of my practice as a teacher and administrator.

As I took a last look at my new school from the Chatham High parking lot on my first day there, I did an internal audit and described in my own mind what I was bringing to Chatham and what my concerns were. I was concerned about the deeply rooted tracking system. I was concerned about the need to make sure the community had accurate information about the school. My first belief was that the Bloomingdale Union School model was the best model for educating young people. My second belief was that learning how to learn was a vital part of any comprehensive definition of education. It was also my belief that simple measures and individual beliefs of what it means to be educated and what should happen in schools have to be challenged and replaced by a detailed common description of what a person would have to know and be able to do in order to demonstrate that he or she was educated.

Approaching Mission: Lessons Learned

During my first couple of months at Chatham, I spent time crafting a mission statement. At the October 1987 faculty meeting, copies were distributed to teachers, and a copy was projected onto a screen. My opening statement was intended to be a real attention-getter: "Education in this country is in trouble and that includes education at Chatham."

Scanning the faces staring at me, I could clearly understand the non-verbal communications. A good number were wishing me a long and agonizing death; several were sure the mass between my ears was solid bone or some other inert material; the senior-most teachers were thinking they had seen all this several times before. My hope that the faculty would see me as the White Knight riding to the rescue had been dashed. A hasty retreat was in order.

This was the beginning of a joint effort to change and improve our school. For the remainder of the school year, we (faculty and administration) worked together to define our purpose. Departments selected representatives to serve on a committee that would draft a "purpose statement," since my effort to be a White Knight turned them off to the term "mission statement." Meetings were open to all members of the faculty, and the representatives were required to attend.

The initial meetings were posturing sessions. I was new and the faculty had seen principals come and go. Some statements that were repeated a number of times represented the tenor of these first meetings: "The school is just fine"; "We are doing our job but parents are not"; "Why waste time on this philosophical stuff? It has no effect on the classroom." At the beginning of the fourth meeting, the science representative and senior science department member made a statement that started the committee moving forward. He said, "Just let me go into my room and teach." The English department representative asked him a question: "What do you mean by *teach*?" The science teacher's face looked like that of a student caught cheating. He could not answer beyond stammering, "You know what I mean: *Teach* means teaching."

The English teacher posed a series of questions in a very soft and respectful way: "Does teaching and learning only occur in the classroom? Is teaching simply lecturing, asking a few questions, doing a few examples, assigning a chapter, and covering material? Have we, as teachers, continued to learn and grow? When we talk to students, do they know why they are here? Are we as teachers learning, growing, and conducting research?" She ended with a rather powerful statement: "If we cannot explain what *teach* means, we have a problem. Maybe we should start by explaining why we are here and what we are trying to do."

This was the conception of the Chatham High School (CHS) Purpose/Goals and Objectives Statement. Committee members wrote suggestions which were shared with colleagues. Informal faculty room conversations took place, departments spent time discussing their ideas, and some teachers not on the committee attended the meetings. By June 1988 a draft document was completed and circulated among the teachers, who were asked to share their reactions with members of the committee. In September the draft was revised, and at the October 1988 faculty meeting it was presented.

The CHS Purpose/Goals and Objective Statement was unanimously approved. It did not bear any

resemblance to my mission statement of a year ago; it was much better. I had learned a lesson: the work of a group is usually better than that of an individual. The English teacher who served on the committee and asked the question that helped the committee move forward stopped me on my way out of the meeting. "You started this by giving us a push, but we had to work on it and finish together." Another lesson learned.

The adoption of the statement was a first step, but it would be useless unless the program was restructured and the practice altered on the basis of the statement. It was time to give a gentle nudge to the next step. As the statement was being developed it was obvious to me that the faculty had reached the same conclusions as Ted Sizer. Seeing that our statement was a mirror image of the Coalition of Essential Schools' nine Common Principles, I put together an information packet that demonstrated this. However, instead of labeling the nine Common Principles, I titled the handout "A Germ of an Idea" because I thought the faculty would quickly see the connection between the statement and the Coalition Principles. In the faculty room the handout was referred to as "the plague." It was discussed informally and at department and faculty meetings; later the nine Common Principles were identified as the work of Ted Sizer. Copies of *Horace's Compromise*, *Shopping Mall High School*, and *The Last Little Citadel* were circulated and read before all departments were asked to put their thoughts, reactions, and concerns in writing. Each department selected a representative who would meet with me for five days during the summer to examine the written input and decide on our next step.

Leaders Emerge

During this same period, a social studies teacher accepted an invitation to participate in a seminar sponsored by SUNY Albany's Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA). Thirty-two building-level educators, primarily teachers from the Albany area, met one full day each month for three months and then for a weekend. The participants spent time examining how schools were put together, and their findings and discussions were later published in a report. They concluded that if student learning was a priority, the way schools were operated made little sense. The participating teacher from Chatham, well respected in the community and by colleagues, consequently became an advocate for change in our

school. In his report to the faculty on his experience at the seminar, he described, in a way with which his fellow teachers immediately identified, how schools operated: "We are driven by coverage. It is like throwing mud at the wall and hoping some of it will stick." This teacher was selected by his department to be its representative for our upcoming five-day summer session.

We met in August 1989. On the first day, data such as teacher/student ratio and information on student achievement were presented and reviewed. The next day an educator from a Coalition of Essential Schools member school joined the group to give us an overview of his experience and answer three hours of questions. Day three began with an examination of each department's written reflections and subsequent discussions. There was no shortage of reasons why change was impossible. The list of obstacles that would prevent change became endless, as several teachers insisted on immediate, detailed answers to questions of what would happen if changes were made. This initial panic seemed natural, but it was consuming the group and needed to be redirected from being against something to being for something. I asked the group members what they would do if they were in charge and could design a school from scratch.

At this point the representative of the science department took charge and started the discussion, debate, and reflections that would consume the rest of our week. She made the following statement: " I would want for our students what I experienced in college [a fine women's college]. Every student knew she was there for an education. It was a place to cultivate the mind. Students knew they were required to work in order to learn." This prompt forced us to take a close look our practice.

Charting a Course

At the end of the session we identified a theme: improve the educational environment. The first step was to use the group of representatives as a nucleus for an expanded committee that would visit schools, gather information, and report to the faculty, superintendent, community and board of education. The expanded committee would also make recommendations on how to improve the educational environment. This committee, which met once every two weeks, included members of the board of education, parents, community, members, and additional teacher representatives.

The committee as a whole, supported and approved by the board of education and superintendent, went to visit other schools by van, thus allowing members to work en route and discuss the visit on the return trip. On one of these trips a reporter from the local newspaper, *The Chatham Courier*, joined the group. He was an alumnus of Chatham High and participated in the committee's conversation. Having the reporter as a captive audience in the van made it possible for the committee to educate him and answer all his questions; it also resulted in accurate reports and supportive coverage of several issues in the paper. The committee itself made regular reports directly to the faculty, superintendent, and board of education.

Another undertaking of the committee was to participate in a workshop on the Coalition of Essential Schools for four full days over a five-month span. At the last session in March 1990, the committee decided to recommend that Chatham High School redesign its program and practice based on the Coalition's nine Common Principles, but the political process needed to move from recommendation to adoption was a difficult one.

Facing the Opposition

The faculty was fully informed of all committee undertakings and had been the force guiding the committee's work. At a faculty meeting in the spring of 1990, members of the committee were scheduled to make a presentation to the faculty. Prior to this, individual meetings were held with every one of the forty-five faculty members. Twenty-four were very supportive, seven were somewhat supportive and willing to give the committee's recommendations a chance, and three raised some legitimate questions and were not sure if they could support the recommendations. I referred to this group as "the loyal opposition." Their concern was genuine, they were respected, they worked hard, and they were invested in the school.

Most of the remaining teachers were fence-sitters. However, there was a small group which the rest of us referred to as the OFOS (opposition's for opposition sake). Unfortunately, a couple of these teachers were nasty and would berate and attack all those who failed to accept their credo, which was: be against any- and everything, but stand for nothing. What made matters worse was that one member of this group, whom we'll call OFOS #1, had been transferred to Chatham High for one year so the new

principal in another district building could have his first year free of this person's unpleasant influence. One of his tirades was reported to me by a couple members of the loyal opposition. They asked to speak to me off the record because they wanted to make a suggestion: "You know," they observed, "that the committee can easily win a vote, and so does everybody else. OFOS #1 will simply target all those who vote and verbally abuse them for years to come. We want you to be the target of abuse. Just say we are going to make the changes, but only those who volunteer have to be involved. It will be less divisive." I spoke to them for a long time.

The following day I posed their suggestion to two members of the committee. They thought it was a good political move to set me up as the target because it would relieve at least a portion of the anxiety of those who were willing to take a risk. At the faculty meeting I followed the advice of the loyal opposition. The committee members said that, based on discussions with every member of the staff, changes were being made, and teachers only had to be involved in the first year if they were volunteers. The importance of the decision was emphasized by the attendance of two members of the board of education. I became the target of the OFOS immediately and, over the last four years, have been the recipient of their attacks. So much of their energy was directed toward me that the risk-taking, thoughtful teachers have been relieved of at least some anxiety. Looking back, I now realize that one more necessary lesson had been learned: The principal can serve as a target so teachers willing to take risks are relieved of at least some anxiety.

Four years later, looking back at the committee, I recognize that we made a mistake, an error of omission, in that we had not included students in the process of charting reform. This proved to be a costly mistake because students would have been another resource for the committee and would have been a direct and credible link with those whom schools are intended to educate. For the most part, though, the committee did its job, and Chatham High School took another step.

Addressing Assessment

In May 1990 members of the committee made a request to the board of education to change our program based on the nine Common Principles. They also answered a series of questions posed by the board. These questions were important. One board representative asked why changes were needed, and

another wanted to know the effect the changes would have on college admissions. The next question presented a dilemma and was difficult to answer: "How will we know if the program is successful?"

One cannot answer by saying that traditional measures like SAT scores and, in New York State, Regents examinations would show improvement because they are part of the reason schools are paralyzed. The Regents examinations are notorious for testing coverage alone and they simply do not measure the highest levels or in-depth learning. These examinations force teachers to adopt the pedagogical approach of throwing mud at the wall and hoping it sticks. The committee's answers to questions about the reason for change and college admissions were well prepared and researched; looking back, one can see that they have withstood the test of time. However, the answer to the question of how we would know if we were successful should have been clearer and more extensive. It should not have been tied to SAT scores and Regents examinations. Students in Chatham have done well on these measures, but using these students as a reference for success has prevented the school from making changes it needs to make.

The answer given said that survey data on students, teachers, and parents would be collected annually, and it stated that students' products would be collected and compared each year. Included was a statement that a greater percentage of students would take and pass the Regents examinations and a statement that SAT scores would reflect a broader participation while the average score would remain the same or improve. These last measures produced a trap. The program, which required in-depth learning, was going to be judged successful by instruments that measured coverage of lower-level learning. Teachers knew how they would be judged and felt they were forced to continue instruction that emphasized coverage. In retrospect, it is obvious that we should have developed and collected examples and models of what students' work would look like if the program were to be successful. This is something that we now must do. Nonetheless, the board of education approved the committee's recommendation, which was supported by the superintendent.

Dr. Lee Wilson, superintendent in Chatham from 1987 through 1993, created an environment where education of all children was a priority. Not your typical central office administrator, he realized that those closest to the learning—teachers and building administrators—must take the lead in any effort to improve education. He was well informed, knowledgeable, and always helped me and others examine

and explain issues and proposals. Perhaps his greatest attribute was that he understood the debilitating "let-us-make-everything-average syndrome." Dr. Wilson never dwelled on the teacher/student ratio or how much above average the test scores were. In fact, he did not consider the state, national, or regional averages to be particularly worthy standards on which to base decisions. His approach was, what do we need to educate our students? A very rare superintendent, Dr. Wilson was one of a select few who realized that education must change. He believed the young people needed and deserved a better education than that provided by nearly every private, parochial, and public school in the nation.

Explaining the need to change proved to be difficult. A number of newsletters were sent to every parent. Newspaper articles were written. Three evening meetings for parents were held and were well attended. Ultimately, there were several types of reactions. One group immediately embraced the changes. A second group immediately attacked them because the tracking system that had been eliminated had been their means of ensuring privileged treatment and additional resources for their children. A third group had the traditional school image so ingrained that they could not see or understand a way of educating students that differed from that model. Finally there was a group that was willing to accept the changes because they were enthusiastically supported by well-respected teachers. The task of informing parents and explaining to them the need to change was the next-to-last step before the program began.

Progress and Roadblocks

During the summer of 1990 teachers met in teams to plan for the upcoming school year. Sessions covered developing curriculum and assessment, staff development, and grounding in the Coalition of Essential Schools' nine Common Principles. In September 1990, the Coalition program at Chatham began in grades nine and ten. Since the changes were intended to create conditions for teachers that would allow them to build practices based on the Common Principles, teachers in English, math, science, and social studies were organized into interdisciplinary teams of four. Approximately eighty students were assigned to a team for five periods, two hundred minutes a day. This was an increase of 20 percent over previous years. Teachers controlled the time of two eighty-minute blocks and one forty-minute block. However, most days consisted of one period of each subject and an enrichment/assistance/inter-

disciplinary period. The teachers, on the other hand, were trained to work in short blocks of time and practiced teaching in short blocks. Being conservative by nature, they found it difficult to change and use longer blocks of time. If we could do it over again, more time and effort would have been devoted to staff development focused on use of longer blocks of time.

In 1992 the teaming of teachers moved to grade eleven and then, in 1993, to grade twelve. The senior team spent the summer of 1993 developing five Exhibitions for seniors. These Exhibitions were requirements for three courses: health, English, and social studies. After four years the school is now moving in the right direction, but it has a distance to go.

Looking back, I see there are some things that should have been done differently. Others things have worked well, such as the teaming of teachers. Every teacher who is a member of a team believes that it is better than working in isolation. One teacher said it best: "We would never go back." We are also seeing the evolution of the principle of demonstration of mastery. All teams require Exhibitions, some are interdisciplinary, and a good collection of model Exhibitions is being gathered. The community and others are involved in viewing and judging, and teachers are developing the expertise needed for this type of assessment. Not everything, though, has worked as well.

The elimination of the tracking system has proved to be difficult. There are parents of students who would have been in "honors" classes who adamantly opposed their elimination. They were accustomed to a system that gave them smaller classes, a selection of the most experienced teachers, and a disproportionate percentage of the resources. Students were given an opportunity to earn honors credit by doing select assignments and producing work that met a specific criteria. This opportunity was open to all students, but these honors students and parents were unwilling to give up what they felt were privileges and advantages. At parent meetings this group dominated meetings, making claims that their children were being held back because the teacher could not "cover" as much material. They made statements that gave a clear picture of the deeply entrenched role of the school in sorting out and reinforcing the class structure: "We do not want our children with them. Our children are used to being with each other, not [with] those unmotivated troublemakers." Four years later the resistance has lessened, but not disappeared. Data on test scores, course completion, college admission, and survey information all confirm

that honor students are doing as well and, in some cases, better than those who preceded them in a system that was tracked.

Each year, data on the program is collected and a report is made to the board of education. The data, including test scores, survey results, and other qualitative and quantitative information, definitely supports the claim that the changes have been successful, but there are problems associated with the reports.

One problem is that there are those who will focus on part of the data and ignore the total in order to attack the program. For example, a report one year on all Regents examinations showed an increasing percentage of students taking and passing the exams and the same distribution of scores as in pre-reform days on all but one exam. It is this one exam that is the focus of those who blindly attack the program.

A second problem is that some in the community intentionally misrepresent the data. This was a more serious problem on one occasion when two such individuals were teachers. Such misrepresentation consumes enormous energy and time since it requires that we invite the public in to see original data, continually distribute accurate information, and mount a public relations campaign.

Another problem is the trap of reporting test scores that do not represent the type of in-depth learning a Coalition program is intended to cultivate. Producing data that is easily understood, accepted, and representative of in-depth learning is difficult. This is a problem that has persisted for four years.

Student involvement is another problem we have encountered. Since we had made the mistake of not including students in the original committee, students expected to return to school in September and find everything the same. Confused and resentful, they did not understand the changes or why they were made. There were individual meetings, team meetings, and meetings with the student senate. One result of the student senate meeting was the formation of a group which visited other schools. In the spring of 1993, announcements were made in every English class that students who wanted to attend a student leadership conference should submit their names. Six students attended. In the fall they trained others and conducted a schoolwide, full-day discussion of what education should be. The small groups worked well, but the large groups turned into gripe sessions. Nonetheless, more students began to discuss and become involved in their education. In May 1994, a second group of ten students attended the leadership conference and returned determined to help move the school forward. They have a plan and are con-

nected by e-mail with other schools and students. The mistake of not involving students is thus slowly being rectified.

We have also faced the problem of a divided faculty. Since the first two years of the program affected only grades nine and ten, a division was created between Coalition teachers and the rest of the faculty. A couple of the OFOS remained in the high school and became malicious. They had no respect for the truth and tried to claim that the Coalition teachers did not carry an equal load. When the program was extended to grades eleven and twelve in 1992 and 1993 respectively, teachers were moved to ensure a mix of individuals with team-teaching experience and those without any experience. The divisiveness has lessened, but it has not gone away completely.

Chatham is continuously tinkering with and modifying its program in the process of evolving into a true Coalition school. Advisory, for instance, has changed each year. Operating with the purpose of ensuring that every student is known well by at least one adult in the school, advisory was scheduled for forty minutes once a week in the first year when team teachers served as advisors. The next year, team teachers and others served as advisors during weekly sessions. The third year, advisors were homeroom teachers and made contact with each advisee during homeroom once every two weeks for ten minutes. This year there were five sessions of forty minutes planned by a task force, and all teachers served as advisors. Next year it will meet biweekly for forty minutes, and sessions will be planned by a joint student-teacher-administration committee. Although we have sacrificed continuity, we have acknowledged the role of evolution in reform.

This evolution was helped in 1993 when Chatham became one of the six schools to form the first cluster of the Fifty Schools Project, an initiative intended to provide national models of restructuring programs based on the nine Common Principles. This initiative has provided us with support and resources for everything from staff development, to articulation, to planning for the future.

There are several areas I will focus on in the future. I will work with teachers to continue the evolution by concentrating on the Fifty Schools Project. In addition, I will provide support for the student leadership and school-visiting groups, work with a parent group, and provide parent education courses to build understanding of the Coalition and the need to change.

The last area is what I call the Rule of 56/112. To change an institution that is as entrenched a concept as a school, you need steady and varied ways to inform, reinforce, and clarify the need to change and a program to meet these needs. Therefore communication must be flowing in many directions; thus the Rule of 56/112: Never assume that you have communicated effectively unless you have delivered the message in 56 ways and it has been restated to you 112 times.

The Rule of 56/112

1. Be a champion (as an individual or a group); articulate the need to change and advocate for change.
2. Create a dictionary of common terms.
3. Deliver a passionate and compelling message.
4. Build a physical model of what you want.
5. Identify likely allies and make contact.
6. Keep people focused on what should be.
7. Capture a reporter for a day.
8. Bring in experts.
9. Use local expertise.
10. Use state education departments to make it legitimate.
11. Give a prize for what you want.
12. Target lies and counter them immediately.
13. Create a video of what you want to see and what you are doing.
14. Be a pit bull; never go away even when battered and bruised.
15. Draw up a schedule for repeating the message.
16. Distribute school newsletters (at least six a year).
17. Provide information through the student newspaper.
18. Train people to go door to door.
19. Have a regular column in the local newspaper.
20. Do research and provide facts that support your case.
21. Use real-life stories to make your case.

22. Send people to conferences to participate and make presentations.
23. Place visuals around the school.
24. Organize a student group to visit other schools.
25. Open the school to visitors then train students, teachers, and parents to be guides.
26. Let trained parents present at parent meetings.
27. Answer the telephone "Chatham High School, a member of the Coalition of Essential Schools."
28. Design a T-shirt.
29. Produce a drama production (e.g., about a traditional classroom and Coalition classroom).
30. Print a booklet, "This Is Our School."
31. Have village meetings.
32. Train members of the community to be members of a panel judging Exhibitions.
33. Link up with a university or college.
34. Have a Senior Exhibition Night open to the community.
35. Create new traditions.
36. Admit to weaknesses and do something about them.
37. Assess your program in a way that is compatible with what you are trying to achieve.
38. Create and distribute bumper stickers.
39. Report often to all audiences.
40. Host a conference in your building.
41. Make use of public access television.
42. Design a poster.
43. Celebrate the anniversary of your program.
44. Find ways to form ties with others doing the same work.
45. Make a list of advantages for students.
46. Put a person out front (i.e., principal) to absorb some of the abuse that comes with change so risk-taking teachers are relieved of some stress and anxiety.
47. Keep a record as you evolve and write a history.
48. Make up a symbol that positively represents what you are doing.
49. Preach that change is evolutionary, not revolutionary.

50. Resist buying a package that has locked-in steps.
51. Find a way to be part of a group that receives special recognition.
52. Host potluck meals; sit around and talk about your work.
53. Take time to practice new ways and do it in a very public way.
54. Build a staff development plan that is continuous.
55. Give teachers a chance to create something new.
56. Redefine teaching and education, then practice what you preach.

This list is not the end of my story or the story of Chatham High School. It is one part of the next step in the evolution of the Coalition of Essential Schools program here and a clear understanding, widely accepted and understood by the community, of what it means to be educated.

Brian Howard has been principal of Chatham High School since 1987.

Perhaps the most difficult task in approaching reform is that of discerning where to begin and how to move forward. Brian Howard gives a clear picture of that process in his reflective essay above. Below, Lois Jones condenses such a process into an instructive catalog of progress. Prior to restructuring efforts that began in 1991–1992, Oceana was a comprehensive high school. By many standards, the school was doing well but, as Jones puts it: "We were not meeting the needs of enough students to prepare them for work and life in the next century." Jones writes of the process that then unfolded as her school undertook the planning and implementation of a restructured school program:

Lois Jones
Oceana High School, Pacifica, California

By the middle of April the faculty had gone through an interview and application process. The selected faculty and I then made plans for the new school. After hearing about the general structure of the program, students and parents were given the choice to stay or to attend another school across town.

In the ensuing months, a new vision of the school emerged. We wanted a school that was more personalized and engaging, one which would encourage active involvement by students in their own education. We wanted to respond to the needs of today's kids and to the demands of society.

Planning was leading us in the direction of the Coalition of Essential Schools. As we began to focus on the Coalition's Common Principles, there developed a sense of purpose that to this day drives our work to improve student learning. It would be dishonest to even imply that the road to change was smooth because old habits die hard, but improving student learning became the outcome on which we could agree. We learned from our initial efforts that the more you know, the more you realize you don't know. The more we change, the more we see how many new directions, possibilities, and challenges open up before us.

When the focus of the "new" Oceana became clear, developing schoolwide outcomes for all students became the work of staff, students, parents, and the business community. Coming to consensus on the question, What should a graduate of Oceana High School look like? was not nearly as difficult as I had imagined. We agreed that graduates of Oceana would be, as demonstrated by Exhibition:

- Proficient in basic skills of communication (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), mathematics, and physical fitness.
- Problem-solvers who know how to visualize solutions, find resources, use technology, learn new skills, and follow a process.
- Creative, reflective, and critical thinkers who can express themselves, make reasoned judgments, defend choices, and interpret historical, scientific, artistic, and other evidence to help draw conclusions and help make life meaningful.
- Able to work independently and with others cooperatively to accomplish tasks that require planning, responsibility, presentation skills, and self-evaluation.
- Respectful of themselves, other people and cultures, the community, democratic values, and the environment.

The outcomes sounded great; they were good words printed on a sheet of paper, but it wasn't until we began to measure them against student work that they came to life. We continue to believe that our

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outcomes for what a graduate should look like are sound, but rethinking and rewriting them so that mastery can be clearly measured is work yet to be done.

During the first two years our attempts at fulfilling our outcomes focused on:

- Interdisciplinary humanities courses for all four years that combine English, social studies, and fine arts, with connections between other curricular areas when possible;
- Depth over coverage, critical thinking, and skill mastery emphasized in the classes;
- Advisory groups to meet four times a week and to appoint representatives to student government;
- "Interim Week" of mini-courses based on student interests and needs, experimental learning, field trips, etc;
- Teachers using more authentic assessments, group and individual projects, cooperative learning, and pedagogical methods that stress active involvement and personal interests of students;
- Redesign of the library to support more student research projects and use of information technology;
- Mainstreaming of special education students with a tutorial period;
- Elimination of tracking;
- Elimination of hall passes and no policy of detention; staff models values;
- Students helping to plan and organize events at the school;
- The development of a strong student government;
- Establishing a block schedule with three ninety-five-minute periods each day and a shortened schedule on Wednesday to allow for staff curricular planning;
- Establishing site-based management with shared decision making by consensus;
- Modification of usual certificate staff roles; i.e., the principal, vice-principal, librarian and counselors would each teach a class; some counseling functions would be fulfilled by advisory; teachers would take on some administrative functions; classified staff would perform multiple roles and be available for classroom assistance;
- Community service required for all students;
- Undercurrents throughout the curriculum and school program—readings, discussions, events, etc.—emphasizing multicultural and environmental awareness and respect.

During the 1993–94 year, then, Oceana High School:

- Introduced a peer coaching system;
- Began to examine student work in assessing how well schoolwide outcomes were being mastered;
- Focused on expanding meaningful connections between math and science and other teaming areas;
- Implemented a freshman house structure;
- Focused on ongoing health education as an important function of advisory.

Currently we have identified and are beginning to work on five visions for improving student learning (to be implemented over a five-year period):

VISION ONE: Achievement of outcomes will be assessed primarily through a system of Exhibitions and portfolios.

VISION TWO: Each student will have an "education plan" developed in the freshman year and evaluated at the end of each year in a meeting between the advisor and student. (Parents are encouraged to attend but must read and sign the plan in any case).

VISION THREE: The curriculum will be the same for all students in the first two years (excepting one elective course each year), but in the second two years students may pursue interests and demonstrate mastery of outcomes in different ways, including the achievement of a Special Emphasis Diploma.

VISION FOUR: Teaching and learning will be focused on outcomes, will make use of projects and other active, student-centered work, will be interdisciplinary and theme-driven, and will be personalized to fit the needs and interests of students.

VISION FIVE: The values of democracy, trust, respect, decency, and responsibility (which apply to oneself, others, the school community, the world community, and the environment) will be reinforced in students.

As principal, my journey has been exciting, and I find the work hard, the personal and professional pride strong, and the possibilities limitless. All that I do is affected by who I am. My personal beliefs and values are strong and not to be compromised. Being just and fair are qualities I expect from myself and

seek in others. Respectfulness is of the utmost importance in being a positive role model, and I expect no more from others than I expect from myself. I believe that credibility is a key to success, that it is earned over time, and that it can be destroyed overnight. Prior to my participation in the restructuring of Oceana High School, I knew who I was and what I stood for, but I wasn't aware of what I would learn and have reinforced about whole-school change.

That list is substantial:

- Site-based management is a slow, painful process; patience is a key ingredient.
- Building capacity of others is necessary in order for them to take more responsibility and leadership.
- Change is frightening and people respond in myriad ways. Staff development is not an event but an ongoing process. Even among a staff dedicated to change, old habits die hard.
- Risk-taking in a safe environment becomes easier with practice. We can't always succeed in all we do.
- A changing school becomes a target for criticism and rumor.
- Assessment must be ongoing and continual and philosophies, outcomes, nine Common Principles, and the like must often be revisited.
- Personalization of an educational program produces observable changes in students.
- Progress has been made when all agree whole school change is an ongoing and never ending process.
- Focus must stay on the work in the classroom.
- Decision making is powerful and develops leadership and ownership.
- Governance issues consume energy that can easily take the focus out of the classroom and away from improving student learning.
- Cooperation among the superintendent, board, and union around issues of school reform is of paramount importance.
- Building community is hard work and a never-ending process.

Support has come to me personally and to the Oceana High School community from the Coalition of Essential Schools and California Center for School Restructuring. Opportunities for growth have been made available that enabled staff at Oceana to participate and grow from meetings, workshops, confer-

ences, and symposia. We are part of the National Faculty network affiliated with Citibank, Four Seasons, Math/Science, and Thomson Fellows. Through these programs we grow strong, deepen our thinking, and participate in San Francisco Bay area, state, and national networks. There is a sense of being part of a significant reform effort. The conversation goes on, the ideas emerge, and the stage is set for improved student learning.

Recently I've come to ponder the current, pressing issues at Oceana. Some have just surfaced; others are ongoing. In either case, serious work needs to be done if we are to deal successfully with these concerns:

- What must we do to maintain momentum for schoolwide change for all students?
- How can we better educate and involve the community in the educational program?
- What must we do to guarantee rigor in the educational program as we make meaningful connections among learning areas and focus on student demonstration of mastery?
- How can ongoing assessment of our progress be used to enhance learning opportunities for students?
- How can we best manage the time we have and not be constantly overwhelmed because there never is enough?

Being principal at Oceana High School is connected to who I am and what I believe about learning, teaching, and potential. The work is both exciting and demanding. I find joy in being an integral part of a well-functioning team, and still I often feel alone. I have a deep desire to go on and continue with the work, but I am getting tired. Oceana High School is a work in progress in which I have had a significant role since the program began in 1991. It has always been my belief that a strong, sound educational program is not dependent on any one person, yet I wonder: Will I have the insight and fortitude to let go while I'm still effective?

Significant and meaningful changes in practice can improve student learning. We have taken our first steps.

Lois Jones has been principal of Oceana High School since 1991.

II

CULTIVATING REFORM THROUGH LEADERSHIP

Charles E. Mingo
DuSable High School, Chicago, Illinois

When I came to DuSable High School, it was like returning home. Although I was born in McComb, Mississippi, I was reared in Chicago, just around the corner from DuSable. My parents, Frank, Sr. and Cornelia Mingo, were extremely concerned for the education of their three boys. Childhood was difficult in Chicago during my early years, but my parents made sure that we not only stayed focused, but that we always did our best in school.

Teaching is in my blood. I come from a three-generation family of teachers and educators. My mother was a teacher in a one-room school in Mississippi, and my great-uncle taught school. Four of my uncles were educators in the Mississippi school systems and three became principals. The Mississippi school board regulation in those days would not allow married women to teach. It is a fact that my mother was forced to leave the teaching field when my brother was born. She kept her marriage a secret in order to continue teaching.

All of the positive role models that I remember were teachers. Teachers taught me to assess my abilities, to make use of my talents, to reach my highest potential, and they motivated me to do my best at all times. It was no surprise to my family when I chose to become a teacher. I wanted to make a difference, and teaching has given me that opportunity.

My parents insisted that the young men in our family take education seriously. As a youngster, I was allowed to play sports only after I showed that I could do well academically, which I did. I earned an undergraduate degree in education at Northern Illinois University in 1964 and a Masters in education from Chicago State University in 1969. Presently, I am working on a doctorate degree through Roosevelt University.

I started my teaching career in 1964 at Forrestville North Branch of DuSable High School and later that year moved to Harlan High School, where I remained until 1970. I was then an assistant principal at

Austin High until 1974, when I was selected as assistant principal to help open the Whitney Young Magnet High School. I remained there until 1985 and then became the first high school district administrator with responsibility for day-to-day operations in twenty-six schools. In 1988, I was assigned as principal of DuSable High School in the very heart of one of Chicago's poorest communities. Over the years I have won many honors and awards, but none has given me as much satisfaction as this opportunity to work with the children in the same community where I started.

Because of my background, I felt a very personal closeness to DuSable, the community, and the faculty. Even before I came into the building, I met with faculty members, parents, and community leaders. As one might imagine, they poured out a considerable list of problems and joys, suggestions for improvements, gripes, and complaints. Except for a very few staff members, most of the people I spoke with knew that we had to make some drastic changes immediately.

My approach was to change the mind-sets of the faculty and staff. Most believed that things had to be the way they were. Students came from troubled homes; crime, drugs, and poverty had devastated the community. Parents had lost control of their children and their families; therefore school and schooling were not top priorities. I started off telling the teachers that they *could* make a difference and that I *expected* each of them to make a difference. I found creative ways to free veteran teachers and include them in the school's leadership team as my motto became, "If you think you can, you can!" Moreover, with the new Chicago school reform legislation, more parents became involved in the school community, and, for the first time in many years, parents were held directly responsible for the operations of their local schools.

Year One: Rebuilding a Tradition of African-American Pride

At DuSable High School, where ACT scores were traditionally in single digits, where reading and math standardized test scores had lagged among the bottom twelve schools (often referred to as the "dirty dozen") for the last ten years, and where a child had been fatally wounded a few years before, I was challenged to see if I could make a difference.

Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable High School is a school steeped in Black tradition and history. This school had won the reputation as Chicago's most historic high school. Built in 1935, it was not only the first high

school primarily for an African-American student body, but it produced Chicago's first African-American mayor, and many other firsts in many professions and fields. Over the years DuSable had fallen into trouble with graffiti-strewn facades, broken and destroyed lockers and windows, cracked and filthy walls, lack of equipment and books, a 73 percent dropout rate, as well as inadequate facilities. The school had a great deal to be proud of, but it had lost hope and pride. While DuSable had some of the best teachers in the system, we had a number of teachers and other staff members who had mentally retired while they were still in the classrooms.

Since the day I accepted the principalship of this school, I realized that I had to become a role model for what I expected of my teachers and staff. That summer I immediately began to seek out teacher leaders and to redefine leadership roles and responsibilities—giving teachers a clearer and stronger role in the operations of the school. I also discovered large groups of students on a course of self-defeat and self-destruction. Students were not only failing and dropping out in large numbers, but they were also hurting each other and had lost their sense of worth.

That first year I decided not to evaluate teachers but to work on restoring order to the school. My plan had four major components: 1) provide guidance that would build pride, self esteem, and a sense of worth in the students, 2) significantly increase parent, community, and alumni involvement in every aspect of school life, 3) create an atmosphere where academic growth could occur and where students and teachers could see a connection between school and the real world, and 4) encourage and motivate teachers to get involved with the Coalition of Essential Schools and to initiate necessary curriculum changes, new programs, attendance policies, high standards, and new instructional thrusts that would effect changes for the future.

Reclaiming the School

The first day I walked into the school I noticed large numbers of students walking the corridors while classes were in session. I called the engineer in and asked him to repair the bells. He worked on the bells for a while, then announced that there was nothing wrong with them. I became irate, ushered the engineer to the corridors, and exclaimed, "If the bells are working properly, why are all of these students in the halls?" He smiled and said, "Welcome to DuSable."

I called the faculty together and we immediately began to reclaim our school. The discipline office was reassessed and reorganized, and we started the long process of developing in our students a sense of responsibility and purpose. Students who were eighteen, nineteen, twenty, and twenty-one, many of whom had not earned any academic credits, were immediately transferred to evening programs or alternative schools. Along with teachers and students, we set our rules and tried to help the students live up to them. It was difficult, and we had to readjust many times, but we were able to affect a decorum change in our school. I believe order is paramount: school must be a place where teachers can teach and students can learn.

DuSable is 100 percent African-American, and more than 90 percent of its students are verified as living below the poverty level. It became a major project to ensure that every student complete a Federal free-lunch program application, since this was the criteria by which the school received federal funds that were greatly needed to make many of the changes we planned. Many of the students, approximately 75 pe cent, lived in the Robert Taylor Housing Projects, in families plagued by crime, unemployment, extreme poverty, and excessive and abusive uses of drugs and alcohol.

In our involvement with Creating A New Approach to Learning (CANAL), a resource program for racially identifiable schools, we began a faculty dialogue to seek new solutions to old problems. One recurring problem was the need to recruit students, and we needed to look closely at our feeder elementary schools to recruit the best and brightest youth from this community. Many of the brightest students in the community would leave to attend the magnet schools. As a part of CANAL and the Chicago Cluster initiative, it became our goal to make DuSable the school of choice for every graduating student in this area. That year we invited every elementary school counselor on the south side of Chicago to visit DuSable, review our programs, and see that it was possible for students to get a good education at this high school.

In that first year we initiated two projects, the restructured study hall project and the freshman reclamation program, which were basically student-centered and designed to address a problem we had identified: students had too much freedom and not enough responsibility. They had to become more accountable for the use of their time.

The restructured study hall project reorganized all study halls into proactive learning centers providing resources and enhancement activities in a classroom setting. The problem that existed was that study

halls were so unstructured that students would leave, walk the corridors, not study, and generally display inappropriate behavior during those periods. The restructuring was designed to make study halls more meaningful, and to raise teachers, paraprofessionals, and students expectations to make students become more responsible. I staffed each restructured study hall with a team of teachers, career service aides, parents, and other volunteers. The team worked with the students to plan for and secure resource persons, alumni, and representatives from various agencies who would visit the study halls daily to provide materials for academic enhancement and personal motivation. No students could leave study halls for any reason except emergencies. This program gave students much needed resources and guidance to assist in redirecting their lives and setting goals for academic growth and productive contribution to the school and to the community. The resource teams helped students find jobs, learn how to solve problems, use the remedial center technology in innovative and creative ways, and investigate opportunities beyond high school.

The freshman reclamation program was initiated when we saw that, by the end of the first ten weeks of school, more than half of the freshmen class had failed three or more major subjects. I brought a group of teachers together to discuss the problem, and ultimately we wrote a proposal for the Reclamation Center designed to aid failing first-year students. Ninety of the failing freshmen were selected and organized into three self-contained classrooms that were completely isolated from the rest of the school. Teachers went to the students, who remained in self-contained groups until they showed signs of academic progress. The project worked! It was not long before we could see significant progress, and we eventually moved the program up to include other grade levels.

Year Two: Remodeling, Restructuring, Rethinking School

School opened this year amid a massive physical rehabilitation and remodeling project. After more than twenty years of getting put off, I had cajoled the system into releasing funds that had been allocated to paint the entire school, replace and restore all student lockers, replace every window in the school, remove dangerous asbestos, remodel our two lunchrooms, repair a leaky old roof and several classroom floors, and clean up a building that had been neglected for some years.

Cajoled is perhaps a modest term to explain how I really got the board of education to put fire under the

various unions and contractors to get the work started. The painters couldn't start until the roof had been finished. The glaziers couldn't remove the old windows, of course, until the contractors had the new ones ready to go up. The bulk of the work was to be done during the summer months, but work stoppages, delays, and various things beyond my understanding led contractors to want to wait until Christmas vacation to complete the work. I insisted that the work continue, selected a teacher with some building trade experience, and gave him the time to coordinate the renovation.

This meant massive reorganization of classes and programs. We had to move classes from room to room throughout the school. Some met in the corridors or auditorium until their rooms were painted or windows were installed. I had shared the problem with the staff, and the majority agreed that if we stopped the rehab project, it would never be completed. Union representatives complained and threatened grievances because of the many problems and inconveniences, but when the job was done, everyone was impressed.

Parent Involvement—At Many Levels

One of the most difficult jobs I had was getting the building engineer to buy into the "new DuSable" idea and to work with us in keeping the building appearance in line with our idea of an appropriate environment for educating children. Our involvement in the CANAL project supports the shared decision-making model, and at every faculty meeting that year we encouraged the engineer, janitors, cooks, and all career service to attend. I wanted to make sure that every player bought into the idea that we were going to change. We got the parents involved in all aspects of the school, then organized an all-school retreat where we developed our mission statement and set plans for improving academics and attendance during that year. The parents felt welcome in the school for the first time in years. Together they developed the DuSable Parents Network, an association which involved several parent groups all working together for the benefit of the children. Our Parent Volunteer Group grew to twenty-five or more parents a day who volunteered in classrooms, lunchrooms, and as hall monitors. This support was really the hallmark of change for our school. We strengthened our participation in the Coalition of Essential Schools, we developed a Junior College outpost center at DuSable, and we started adult literacy classes and other programs which would eventually benefit both the children and parents.

Parents held weekly seminars and workshops to help them learn new skills and discover how they could help their children succeed. Every Wednesday the twenty-five volunteers and other invited parents would come to the school for various workshops on such topics as How to Know If Your Child Is on Drugs, Dealing with Gang Activity, How to Help Your Child with Homework Like Algebra, How to Find Jobs, Problem Solving, Leadership Building, School/Community Support, and many other topics to help parents gain maximum insight into how to help their own children and others.

My whole idea was to build unity among the parents. When they were unified we were all strong, and I believe strong, enlightened parents can help a school succeed. The teachers joined me in this effort because they realized that when parents are readily available to the school, the students do better. The DuSable Parent Network won a $10,000 Ameritech School Leadership Award that year, which also helped them to become even more involved. At first my staff was leery of my positive relationship with the parents: Many staff felt that too many parents hanging around the school would cause problems. Their fears proved to be unnecessary because parents and the school's relationship with parents have certainly proved to be one of the most significant factors involved in turning around this school and guiding it into a more positive direction.

It was this dialogue that would lead us to the development of the PASS (Parent Academic Support Services) Program. At lunch one day, several parents were talking about the tremendous opportunities that their children have in this school today. One parent commented that she wished she had the opportunity to finish high school. As the conversation went on, I suggested that she and others in her situation take part in our after-school GED program and set an example for their children by finishing high school. Several parents jumped right in to chastise me. "Mr. Mingo," one parent explained, " I have three teenage daughters, and if I am away from home three nights a week to go to school, those girls will be left in the housing project alone. Heavens knows what might happen." It then just clicked, right in the grayest part of my head, "What if you went to school during the day with the kids?" Louise Jones, the school's parent coordinator, responded: "Some of them are here all day anyway." One parent, searching to understand, added: "You mean go the same classes with our kids?" "Yes," I assured them, "and earn a regular high school diploma."

After that eventful lunch we sat down with our program developer and wrote the proposal that has

won acclaim around the country. The idea is a simple one. Parents who dropped out of school in eleventh or twelfth grades or who could finish high school with one year would be enrolled as regular students at DuSable, attend regular classes with other students, follow the same rules and regulations, and, upon completion of state requirements, receive a regular high school diploma. The only exception or waiver was for physical education requirements. The PASS Program is working at DuSable. In the first year, three parents graduated from DuSable High School, and in 1994 seven parents were enrolled in classes. Teachers like the idea of having parents in classes, students think it's a good idea to have older persons in class, and parents are excited about the possibilities for their futures.

Together we began to create a vision for our school. Even though we are purported to be the poorest community in America, even though a larger percentage of people in our area receive public assistance or other government financial and social services than in any other part of this country, our parents still want their children to be the best that they can possibly become. They still want their children to go to college. They still want jobs and homes and, most of all, a sense of pride in their neighborhood school. They had long since lost this pride, and they had almost given up. What I did was to make them know that it all depended on them and on what they wanted for their children.

In order to create this new vision we had to educate parents and give them an insight into what kinds of possibilities were out there for them and for their children. The teachers and staff had to be willing to change their mind-sets on what students could do and what they could learn. We developed a vision committee and rewrote the entire vision/mission statement for our school.

Later that year we started to put things into action. We entered into several significant partnerships with business, industry, and educational institutions. Our relationship with AT&T Corporation won us a Writer's Workbench Computer Laboratory that accommodates twenty-four students. It fit perfectly with our goal to increase and improve the writing skills of our young people. The AT&T lab also provides the opportunity for our teachers to have a little more time to work together and to plan for the students. We had discovered that many of our students would plan to go away to college, and when this fell through over the summer, they were not prepared to go anywhere else; so that year, and every year since, we have required every graduating senior to register with a city college before graduation. It started out with

Olive Harvey Junior College, where we had developed an excellent educational alliance. Our plan was to help every student make a plan for life and learning after graduation.

Year Three: Teachers Buy In

In an attempt to prepare teachers for restructuring and changes that were needed at DuSable, I immediately started a campaign to assist them with upgrading their professional skills and to help each teacher become more computer-literate. I required every teacher to go through a computer training program at the school, and Jackie Crawford, business department chair, took on the massive task of developing a schedule and a training program that would accommodate every teacher. We also made the training available to any parents who were interested. Teachers enrolled in Mrs. Crawford's introductory computer course during lunch hour, planning period, before school, after school, or whenever there was a free moment. It started to work: Teachers got excited about computer technology, and those who had never touched a computer before 1990 started thinking of ways to use computers in the classroom or to relieve their paperwork.

That year we eventually used some of our state Chapter I funds to set up a teachers resource center fully equipped with computers and software. We purchased software such as Grade Book, Puzzle Maker, Certificate Maker, Spreadsheets, Test Creator, and other equipment that was designed to benefit the classroom teacher. That resource lab is still in operation today and has been a focal point for change in our school. Many of the teachers who participated in those early training sessions went on to use computer technology in their work.

One of the things that teachers said to me most often was that they needed to see what other people were doing at their schools. From our staff development funds, and through the Coalition of Essential Schools efforts, we started our visits to schools in Chicago, throughout Illinois, and around the United States. Small groups of teachers made their own plans, developed questions, and discussed what they had hoped to see and accomplish. When they returned from these trips, they would share their observations with the entire faculty. We eventually got excited about the "small schools" concept, and a team of six teachers, parents, and school administrators joined the Chicago Cluster Initiative to visit the New York City

school system and several schools there which had made significant progress with the small schools concept.

When we got back home I was as excited as the teachers about the possibility of the "school-within-a-school" concept. We immediately began to share our information and ideas with the entire faculty and this was the beginning of our schoolwide restructuring. This nontraditional approach to providing a more personalized high school curriculum for our 1,400 students guided us to create ten small schools within DuSable High School. This plan offers an opportunity for our troubled students to receive personalized and individualized education. We divided into small schools of not more that 150 students and ten teachers who worked together for four years of high school. We also planned for various assessment tools, such as portfolios, demonstrations, and other authentic assessments as means of evaluating student progress.

I knew that we had to begin to see progress in the academic achievements of the students. I felt that once I developed an acceptable learning environment, getting my teachers and staff to perform at a high professional level would not be difficult, but I was wrong! My teachers needed to be pushed and encouraged to change. They knew that their "methods" had worked for them and they were just plain unwilling to venture out into some unknown territory. Many of the teachers honestly believed that if the students would change or that if parents were more responsible (even if they had had their babies as teens themselves), then our scores would go up, and dropout rates would go down. It took a while for me to convince teachers that we needed to change the way we "do school." As educators we had not changed schooling in almost a century, and the effects of this lack of keeping up with the times show up in our educational comparison with other nations, and in our struggle to maintain our position as a world leader.

Essential Collaboration

If I have one thing significant to contribute as a Thomson Fellow, let it be that I highly recommend that the new way that schools ought to "do business" is in close collaborations and alliances with the community, business, and higher education. Our vision reveals that school must lead children to jobs, careers, advanced studies, or training, and to the realization of a better life in a global society. We began our collaborations with as many groups as we could handle. We wrote a proposal for the Drug-Free Schools program, and began to bring in community resources to give our children alternatives to drugs and vio-

lence. We aligned ourselves with the mayor's Hire the Future program that exposed our youth to the world of work and, at the same time, brought some dollars into their homes. We had six or seven vocational work-study programs, and I became immediately unpopular when I insisted that these teachers either find jobs for the kids or give up their positions. Many of the work-study coordinators were paid on extended day basis and had the responsibility of finding jobs for the students assigned to them. It had been years since they had been challenged, and they rose to the occasion.

During this time, our efforts with the Chicago Cluster Initiative intensified. We were working closely with the police, the park district, the Urban League, Department of Children and Family Services, and the Chicago Housing Authority. The Cluster Initiative had pulled this impressive group together, and I personally helped them to see how every one of them played a significant role in whether my students did well in school. A problem in housing, for instance, affected my students in their homework and in their decorum. Drive-by shootings, crime, and other police matters could cause students to miss significant numbers of days from school. Moreover, if the park district would work closely with the schools, we could possibly use the school for extended recreational resources. The park district instructors could be supplied with numbers of students who would like to learn karate, tennis, golf, fishing, and many other sports and activities we do not now have in our school.

This alliance also led to the creation of the DuSable/Farren Outdoor Recreational and Education Park, where a student advisory council made up of DuSable students and representatives from our feeder elementary schools came up with the idea of a community park located on the grounds between DuSable and John Farren Elementary School. This park would act as a catalyst for the community, providing both educational and recreational opportunities for neighborhood kindergartners through seniors. It is the first such project ever tried in this kind of urban neighborhood setting. A group of national landscape architects and the Chicago Landscape Architects Association joined architects from the Chicago Art Institute to help the students secure more than $500,000 for this project, scheduled to open in 1995.

I asked our vocational staff to seek out programs that would insure the youth with jobs and entry into career fields that were looking for workers now. Together we developed a "tech-prep" proposal for a unique alliance with Malcolm X City College, in which we reorganized our Medical Assistants program and cre-

ated the DuSable Med-Tech Program. A $170,000 Perkins grant bought us the necessary equipment and staff to give youth the opportunity to compete for jobs in hospitals, medical centers, and in the entire health care industry. Teachers would remain at school long hours writing med-tech curriculum and establishing plans and procedures for students to take advantage of the many opportunities this program has to offer.

We secured the latest technology, and students were allowed to take courses at Malcolm X College evenings and weekends. Some of our students have graduated from high school with several college credits under their belts. The program continues to work now because parents and students can see clearly the relationship between doing well in this program and reaching their goals for a successful future in the world of work.

Year Four: Tapping into Resources

By the fourth year, our faculty needed a revitalized spirit. They had the experience and the confidence, but they lacked the exposure to new and innovative ideas. They were also in the mind-set that the children, not the teachers, needed to change. When I first started recommending that teachers visit other schools and other classrooms, they thought I was crazy. When I actually made funds available for the teachers to attend workshops, they were certainly perplexed. Then, at the first teacher in-service day in early September, we planned and executed a teacher in-service together in which all staff members in the school—cooks, janitors, security, and faculty were required to attend a Coalition of Essential Schools and cooperative learning workshop at Chicago State University. We invited Roger Johnson, founder and director of the Cooperative Learning Theory, to direct the workshop. It was one of my most satisfying and rewarding accomplishments—with no telephone calls, no emergencies, and no distractions to keep the entire team from working toward one common goal for the students of DuSable. Johnson's aim was to train and motivate the staff around the benefits of cooperative education. This innovative teaching method allows students to share in the responsibility of teaching and learning from discovery as well as from each other.

As a Thomson Fellow and urban principal, I also believe that if we are to change "schooling" for our children, teachers must seek out and learn ways to use the latest technology in the classroom. Our numerous computer labs are used to support classroom instruction, but our library media center needed a tre-

mendous revitalization. In year four, then, I installed a set of computers in the library for student use, initiated the ERIC research system, and began a move towards a completely computerized library system. Another aspect of new technology installed at DuSable is our TV/video production workshop that explores this creative art form while students learn English, speech, and writing.

One of the major problems reported to me when I came to DuSable was the quality of special education services. Most of the students remained in special education programs throughout their high school years when opportunities for advancement were few. For several years, the board had offered money to introduce inclusion programs for special education students in high school, so I immediately commissioned a group of special education and regular teachers to design an inclusion model for DuSable. We have won more than $15,000 over the last three years to insure inclusion of all special education students in all programs, activities, and extracurricular programs at the school. Our school is handicap-accessible, and we have created self-contained classrooms for severely handicapped students. Our DuSable inclusion program is a team-teaching model, where a special education teacher and a regular teacher share a classroom. Special students who are evaluated as having the ability to benefit from regular class instruction are included in regular classrooms. The special education teacher has the responsibility to see that special students get the necessary support and methods needed to insure that they gain maximum benefits from regular classes.

What the Future Holds

Recently, I started a dialogue with my faculty, parents, and community leaders about the idea of a residential school. Residential schools like Choate, Andover, and Montgomery have worked very well for the rich and famous. We believe, using the same ideas and principles on which those schools are built, that we can help our children overcome the outside influences of broken homes, crime, drugs, gangs, poverty, and the many other circumstances that effect their education. The idea is to take the youth out of troubled environments and give them 'round-the-clock, positive educational experiences, role models, and discipline.

I have only shared with you a fraction of the things we have tried. I think that people need to know that you can't be afraid to try something new. Holding on to the old methods and system when it has failed our children so miserably seems too awful to me. However, there are those educators who cannot stand the

disorder and confusion that change brings about. Not only does change bring about confusion and discontent among the staff, but there is often no way to see if the new methods are working right away. If the staff is not committed, projects just don't work anyway, and when there are so many unknowns that we need to research, so many sites we need to visit and educational leaders with whom to talk, we find this both expensive and near (mind you, I said *near*) impossible to do. I often tell my teachers that I can't accept "no" or "can't," but that I do get excited about "I'll try it another way."

Charles Mingo has been principal of DuSable High School since 1988.

Leadership manifests itself in myriad ways. Human nature, situation, and circumstance will yield a leadership style in one school, such as DuSable, that might differ radically from the style exercised in another. Nonetheless, there are bound to be constants. Joseph Jennelle, of Central Bucks High School East, shares his experience in school leadership and views on skills that any effective principal, particularly one in a reforming school, would do well to hone:

A. Joseph Jennelle
Central Bucks High School East, Buckingham, Pennsylvania

As a teacher, I knew that building administrators had to work too hard. They were responsible for too many people and seemed to get little support. They usually came in to work before everyone else and had to work far later. They got little or no summer vacation and worked holidays when teachers were on vacation. At times, they were criticized by teachers, students, and parents. Why would anyone want that kind of life?

The answer to that question still eludes me. Now that I am a principal, I see that the workload of a building principal is relentless. Until I became a high school administrator, I did not believe people who said they did not have time to accomplish an assigned task. If they really wanted to do it, they would make time, at least that is what I thought. Now, reality dictates that I cannot take more time out of a twenty-four-

hour day. Modern school principals must be both leaders and managers. The manager role is the least desirable for me. It requires operating within a realm of micro-management. Each teacher, student, parent, vendor, central administrator, and fellow building administrator has demands and needs at various times. Micro-managing, looking at small elements within the entire organization, takes time and an emotional toll.

Over eleven hundred students and their families touch my psyche in some way. Families whose aspirations and needs cover the spectrum from Ivy-League bound to completely dysfunctional depend on me to help pave the way through the high school experience. Crises from overdoses and pregnancies to deaths in the family arise. I have been to more funerals in the last four years than in the first forty years of my life.

Every day in a high school brings surprises and challenges. Sometimes students and staff members are angry and hostile, seeking redress from a perceived injustice or personal affront. Others are experiencing personal problems at home or failing classes at school. Adolescent romances regularly crash into the rocks, leaving dazed and emotionally wounded survivors flailing for relief.

We never know when violence will erupt. My administrative colleague three offices down was viciously attacked this past fall by a student who pushed his twenty-pound backpack into the face of his unsuspecting victim. This took place in an upper-middle-class suburban school, not in an inner-city area. At times, I have had to throw away shirts and suits because blood stains rendered them unusable. While I have never been hurt personally, I have witnessed my colleagues taking shots from students who were fighting each other. Too often, students see physical violence as the only way out of a stressful situation, and school administrators are called immediately to save the day.

One hundred employees, from cafeteria workers to administrators, depend on me for leadership, management, security, and a host of other organizational and emotional supports. In fact, few write of the one skill necessary for all effective school administrators, that is, emotional transition. We must be able to leave one meeting where upset parents are weeping at the loss of a prodigal child to another meeting of smiling parents receiving an award for a deed well done. Recently, in one room, a parent threatened a lawsuit because the school was not serving his handicapped child. Just a few seconds later, we had to meet with the parents of another student who had threatened a teacher. Each day brings new challenges and demands.

Central administrators depend upon me to further their goals and handle thousands of organizational requirements, both day-to-day and long-term. My success is their success. My failure is their failure. Their world is abstract, often removed from the human element of a high school. My task is not only to lead the school but to learn from and educate my superiors. School principals are lonely people. We are a peer group of one.

In addition to handling budgets, schedules, and other management tasks, we must be instructional leaders. We analyze our organizations with their multitudes of detail and interrelationships. We must help all within the school to develop a vision for our future and chisel out a philosophical base upon which to support that vision.

Leadership, as opposed to management, is the big picture of building administration. This picture is not a snapshot of the entire school system at a single point in time but a moving picture of the school system projected into the future. Effective school principals must know what they want the organization to become and how to move in that direction. In direct contrast to the needs of one student or staff member, a vision of the future must address the needs of everyone within the organization. Leadership requires a specifically articulated philosophical base and a system to deliver that philosophy throughout the organization.

At a Thomson Fellow workshop at Brown University, we met with fifty teachers and fifteen principals to discuss instructional leadership. Initially, the conversation revolved around the principal. The attitudes heard reflected on recent instructional leadership literature, concentrating solely on the "principal as instructional leader." After more than an hour, four groups concluded independently that everyone who walks into a school must be an instructional leader. Custodians, secretaries, aides, parents, and everyone else who comes into contact with students have the potential to be leaders.

I am on the road, but I am not alone. Learning better is a worthy goal. As educators, we must work together to become more effective and lead the way to having better administrators, better teachers, and better schools.

Joseph Jennelle has been principal of Central Bucks East since 1991.

III

GROWING INTO THE ROLE

Mary L. Burke
Whitfield School, St. Louis, Missouri

I didn't get into Stanford as a freshman—that's why I went into teaching. After being rejected by Stanford, I enrolled in Northwestern University. My sophomore year, I reapplied to Stanford and was admitted as a winter-term junior. Not wanting to be a quitter, I finished out at Northwestern and reapplied for graduate school. Since I had no money, was a comparative literature major, was unmarried, and lived in the midst of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, I applied to the School of Education. I went West, hoping for a student loan and a federal grant, finally fulfilling my goal to attend Stanford.

The year was 1966. As a Stanford intern, after a summer teaching in front of a TV camera to five students (in what was known as the MicroTeaching Program), I undertook my career as a tenth-grade English teacher for two sections of students at Cubberley High School in Palo Alto. The world was not as yet much different from the one that I had left in Missouri—at least until the spring of that school year, 1967. Around February, I noticed that the short-haired boys in my English class had longish hair. That spring, another Stanford-trained teacher, a guy noted as a "cool teacher," went from classroom to classroom to offer the chance to take our kids to on a bus he rented to hear Hubert Humphrey speak at Stanford. I bit. We all piled into the bus and went to the campus. (I never told an administrator, or a parent or my department chair—issues of liability were not yet my concern.) The campus was emotional, angry, and volatile.

Suddenly, the place was becoming very different from the Midwest I had left. The next fall, I was hired as a teacher in another Palo Alto high school, Gunn High School—the newer of the two schools in town. That summer, I worked for the Palo Alto YMCA and, along with two others, hosted a dance at the Gunn High School gym. Country Joe and the Fish was the band. Over a thousand students showed up. I spent the night walking through the aisles of kids seated on the gym floor, collecting cigarettes. I still didn't know enough to check what was being smoked.

That fall, lots of boys had long hair. Girls arrived at school with see-through blouses, no bras, no underwear, and miniskirts. Kids made love on the school grounds and smoked dope on the "smoking hill" designated for cigarette smokers. Some days I would arrive at school and no one would be in my class. "A rally at Stanford or at Berkeley" would be the explanation. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy were killed, and our black students were angry. Everyone was angry.

The evening local news was the same as the NBC national news. Tension and anger were everywhere. So were drugs. I had a student begin to baoble in my class. I dismissed the class. I called the counselor. The student was hospitalized and didn't return for months. When he did he didn't say much. Another student fell asleep in my class. I asked him if class was boring. "No," he said, "I have an early paper route." I believed him. I found out later he was on drugs. A girl in my class became heavier and heavier. Then she was gone. She came back several months later—much thinner. "You look great," I said. "Thanks," she said. It never occurred to me that she had been pregnant.

Gaining Savvy, Developing Conviction

Finally, my husband and I moved back to the Midwest. I took a job teaching in the prep school I had attended. But the West Coast came to the Midwest. This time I understood what was happening. "Look in their lockers," I told the headmaster. "They are doing drugs." He didn't look . . . until it was too late and mainstream kids were smoking pot.

And finally I quit teaching—to have the kids I was supposed to have and to be the housewife I was bred to be. After five years in the classroom, I went home—and was lost. Teaching had become my life, my identity, my meaning. One friend had a baby and hired a housekeeper and kept teaching. But not me. I was home now and doing what mom and dad had always wanted. A subdivision house with options on banister styles and marble sinks and six-paneled doors was what consumed the conversation.

One Christmas, when my children were fifteen months and three years, I was invited to a women's cookie exchange Christmas party, *sans* husbands. I went. They drank champagne punch, these ladies who drank nothing at the subdivision parties while their husbands got drunk. Bored, I mentioned that the Druids had originated the Christmas tree. A reaction occurred. "Do you know what a Druid is? Well, Mary

does." As I walked home, my neighbor across the street said, "I knew what a Druid was, Mary." "Doesn't count now, Cindy," I said. I hadn't experienced such an antiacademic response since I was in eighth grade and was ridiculed for being a good student.

I woke up my husband. "We are moving," I said. And we moved. I returned to the prep school where I had taught and tutored kids. And got angry because I thought the teaching was poor. And went to Washington University to take a course in learning disabilities. And ended up in a Ph.D. program. And graduated as a cognitive psychologist with a focus on teaching writing and reading across the curriculum and with a commitment to the idea that for students to learn, the content must be made meaningful, the student must be active intellectually, and the pedagogy must be organized in such a way as to make the learning event significant so that the concept could become part of the learner's cognitive structure.

And then, I couldn't get a job. I took a job as a researcher for a Missouri task force formed after *A Nation at Risk* was published. The task force director was a politician who, in the job interview, had asked if I needed to be in charge. Wanting the job and thinking that I was telling the truth, I said no. The relationship soured. She said, "Tell them high school kids need four years of English, not three to graduate." "If they do the same thing in class the fourth year, what different does it make?" I asked. Seat time is not learning I told her. She had made it on her street smarts, with no college degree. She didn't need me ruining her agenda. I was shocked by the politics. I quit. And then I had no job until, finally, I was hired to be a consultant for a dying private school known for its drug addicts and rich, spoiled dropouts. I had a vision of what the school could become.

I had met the headmaster at a dinner party. My friend was his new director of development. She thought I could help the school. That was in December. In late May I was hired. I was strongly committed to cognitive learning theory. I arrived at the fall, pre-school faculty meeting dressed up in my silk blouse and skirt, my professional best, to "help" this school move forward. I was met with amusement and disdain. I then found myself relegated to tutoring students. Frustrated, and allied with the development director, I was invited to attend a board meeting to make my recommendations for change. Afterward, I wrote a ten-page document on school design. I sent it to the board chair and the school head. The head was threatened and kept the document from being sent out to the board. I quit. One year later I was ap-

proached to apply for the head's job. He had been fired as a result of a student walkout over a dress-code dispute. I was hired in March of 1984 to head a school of seventy-one students.

Mining Reform

I had met Ted Sizer while working as the researcher for the Missouri task force. I knew of his interest in forming a coalition of schools dedicated to reform. Within a week of my hiring, I made application for membership in Sizer's newly formed Coalition of Essential Schools. Not chosen, but encouraged by Ted, I attended the first forum in the summer of 1985 and again in the summer of 1986, at which point we applied for membership.

Whitfield School joined the Coalition of Essential Schools in the fall of 1986. Initially, we agreed that we would attempt to implement the concepts of teacher as coach and student as worker. The issue of coverage, "less is more," was also significant and occupied much of the discussion over the next five years, focusing upon the more traditional teachers' question, "When is 'less' less?"

Looking back over those early five or so years, I am now aware that accidentally we made some good decisions. I had a very strong vision of what needed to be accomplished. Whether it was top-down, bottom-up, or just "this is business as usual," I personally pushed and pushed and pushed the agenda forward: implementing writing across the curriculum with multiple drafts, rejecting multiple choice testing, focusing on making the work meaningful for the students, and emphasizing the responsibility of the teacher to the students. "If they fail, look upon their failures as your own," was my message. I was driven, and those who bought in stayed. Others left. One teacher, after my reviewing his chemistry final and pointing out that it was merely a series of isolated identifications, rewrote a section and then said, "I quit. I can't stand the sound of your high heels on the floor."

As a private school, we needed to market what we did and create a market niche. We were different from the more established schools: we didn't teach writing out of *Warriner's Grammar*. I met with each family applying for admission and carefully presented our philosophy of the school. In retrospect, the clarity of our mission gave the school internal strength. People bought into the educational program and came in the door supportive. We used nonthreatening language. I talked about a "back-to-basics" curricu-

lum, and the small-school, one-room schoolhouse concept. We grouped our students heterogeneously, had no electives, and required the same course of study for all students. Teachers worked hard. They had fewer than fifteen in a section, which allowed for accommodating individual differences. And our students, many of whom had never had academic success, became successful, entered college, and continued on the path to success. The word got out, and the school began to grow from 84 in the fall of 1984 to 99, to 145, to 185, to 220, to 240, to 280, to 315, to 340 plus in the fall of 1994.

Teachers who were not effective were provided support to grow professionally, but if they did not grow, they were not rehired. We attracted young, bright teachers out of Harvard, Brown, Washington University, Northwestern, and Stanford. Some came and left, usually to pursue other careers. Others stayed. And the buildings began to be built; the final wing, incorporating crown moldings, slate floors, a high-tech library, and a computer commons, was opened in the fall of 1993. And the baseball team won the Missouri State Championship. And the school took on the feel of a school of winners. The transformation was indeed quite amazing.

The faculty had became invested in the concepts of teacher as coach and student as worker and in the importance of a "less is more" curriculum. We were soon to discover that one could not implement one of the Principles without implementing all the others. Even the concept of the Exhibition, initially somewhat of a mystery, became significant, as did the importance of meaningful outcomes and planning backwards to make curricular decisions.

Scheduling: A Pivotal Change Issue

It was not long before discussions arose among various faculty members as to the possibility of altering the schedule in order to provide larger blocks of instructional time. My own reluctance to change the schedule stemmed both from the lack of space in our physical plant, which made scheduling difficult in a traditional eight-period day, and from the fact that we had faculty teaching at various grade levels, 7–12, which further complicated blocking, especially teaming. Moreover, I had never taught in the ninety-minute block and was tentative about asking others to do what I had never done myself.

As the school grew from 71 students to approximately 280, however, the staff increased and, in turn,

greater flexibility was offered in scheduling. The plant grew, too, which again offered the opportunity to schedule differently. And, as the program itself became more student-centered—that is, the student actually became the worker—the pressure on students to complete extended homework assignments, absorb large amounts of complex materials, and apply the information to their own research became increasingly more intense. Parents began to complain, not that the work was too hard or inappropriate, but simply that there was not enough processing time for their children to do the research required to submit written work at the level which their own children now viewed as the norm.

Eventually, as a result of what was perceived to be a strong consensus among the faculty to make a major change in schedule design, I decided to mandate the change. At a February faculty meeting, I announced that the schedule would be revised as of the next fall. The faculty was then asked to meet in subject-area groups to discuss the pros and cons of such a schedule change. Various reactions occurred. Faculty in certain subject areas, specifically foreign language and mathematics, were concerned about not meeting daily for practice and review. Others articulated strong support for the change and noted the benefits: engaging in in-depth discussions and allowing the opportunity to provide processing time for completion and integration of long-term assignments, among others. Some, though, mostly for pedagogical reasons, indicated real distress at the thought of such change. One teacher, known to prefer lecture and memorization of content, even though Coalition principles did not support such a learning approach, stated that she would have to change the way she taught and rewrite her lesson plans. It was interesting to note that this teacher had been asked over and over again to change her approach, but until the impact of the schedule became apparent, she had simply ignored the school's stated agenda. The schedule thus was going to have a far-reaching impact on the educational environment of the school, forcing change which previously had been resisted.

It was ascertained that in order to give all faculty the opportunity for success in implementing pedagogical changes necessary for maximizing a ninety-minute block schedule, additional faculty training and development were needed. The school hired the principal of a local middle school and the assistant superintendent of a local school district, both of whom had been actively and successfully involved in implementing a block schedule. The teachers were paid $75 per day to attend a two-day workshop at the end of

the 1992 school year. The thrust of the workshop was to help faculty rethink the time period such that the ninety-minute lesson was actually three thirty-minute periods, each of which required oral, verbal, and kinesthetic activities. The workshop leaders also provided a review of various pedagogical techniques and learning theory which could help teachers implement required pedagogical change.

Coping with Growing Pains

It should be noted that not all faculty demonstrated positive attitudes during the workshop. Disruptive and even disrespectful behaviors were exhibited, even by some of the faculty who had administrative roles in the school. As head of school, I reminded them of the seriousness I placed on their role as professionals and that the pedagogical skills and theories presented would be indispensable in the positive implementation of the new program/schedule. I pointed out that I would be reviewing their efforts in the fall, looking specifically for a variety of pedagogical approaches and a variety of student activities. The biggest concern for me as administrator was that the ninety-minute class would become a forty-five-minute class with forty-five minutes used for homework activity.

Anticipating the need to address potential problems with the new schedule early on, I set a faculty work day for September, three weeks after school had begun. This day was to be used to reevaluate and restructure, if necessary. A second and significant concern for me was how to introduce the schedule change to the parents. Frankly, I had put off this task as long as possible. My own observations of change and the resulting problems were that when change was announced before it could be assessed, resistance developed. We wrote the parents a letter in early August 1992, announcing that there would be a change in the schedule and pointing out that the change would increase time in any given instructional class by thirty minutes per week. We discussed the benefits of not having a particular class meet at the same time daily. We also discussed the curricular and pedagogical reasons for making such a change. I received surprisingly little response, perhaps because the letter opened with a description of the changes in plans which would take place in the 1992–1993 school year. The discussion of schedule changes followed the discussion of plant changes. Not everyone reads everything that a school sends home. Then, approximately two weeks after the letter was sent home, we received a letter from a senior's parents stating that because of the

change in schedule, their child would not return for her senior year. The loss of this child represented a loss of $9,000 worth of tuition fees to the school. It should be noted, however, that upon further conversation with the parent, it appeared that the child, for other reasons, including financial ones, had, along with her parents, contemplated changing schools long before the schedule changes were finalized or announced.

School opened a week earlier than normal, the beginning of the week before Labor Day. The first actual day of school was somewhat difficult. Students had a hard time finding classes, and teachers made overly long assignments, forgetting that their classes might meet consecutively on some days. Day two was much better, and on day three we had a faculty meeting. I had informally interviewed a large number of students during lunch time, in the hallways, and after school to assess their reactions. I also interviewed parents as they waited to pick up their children. The first week ended on an upbeat note. That Friday night, though, a young teacher was killed in a car accident. The school experienced the trauma one would expect. The second week was a week of mourning and reconstitution. Ironically, the schedule became a nonevent, compared with the tragedy the school had experienced.

Week three started afresh. A new teacher had been hired. The year had finally begun. Teachers and students spoke highly of the new schedule. One teacher who had been openly skeptical spoke about her successful lesson with her eighth grade history class. Having assigned a geography lesson in which students needed to go to the library to do map research and use the computers, the teacher discovered that her students not only had time to complete the map work before the bell rang, but she had time to go over their work, discuss their findings, make a new assignment, check for understanding, and, in general, accomplish what she had planned, knowing that the students had not been too rushed or confused. She was thrilled. And she had discovered that schedule gave her time to refocus and replan.

I met a parent at a varsity field hockey game who said, "Mary, this time I thought you had finally blown it, but by the second day of school, my two daughters had fallen in the groove and they like the new schedule." On back-to-school night in the third week of September, only one parent asked for more information on the rationale of changing the schedule. Most commented on how much sense the change had made.

Communication

Another more controversial change occurred this spring. Having taken our commitment to maintaining the same high expectations for all students seriously, we have adopted heterogeneous grouping. All students, for example, take college preparatory chemistry and physics. The problem is that not all students learn at the same rate and, in these two particular subjects, content is well established in order to prepare students for the university. What has happened is that *less* has become less in the sense that coverage is slow in order to accommodate those students who need more time; thus students for whom the concepts are less difficult are held back—the typical situation in which one argues for tracking.

Our solution was to begin the study of chemistry and physics in the eleventh-grade year, offering two strands. Strand A would cover the chemistry and physics texts at a slower rate, allowing for two years to study these subjects. But, the course would not be diluted. These students would complete a serious college preparatory curriculum in both chemistry and physics. Strand B would allow those students for whom it was appropriate to move more quickly, and in the two years complete not only the college preparatory chemistry and physics texts but move on to study at the AP level and take the AP tests, if they so chose, in the spring of the senior year. This decision seemed so logical. We presented the concept to the board of directors and again it was met with approval. We did not do a good job, however, of communicating with either parents or students. When the word got out that juniors would take both chemistry and physics, parents and students panicked. One parent claimed no student could study two sciences at the same time—forget what the German, British, and Japanese kids study; another parent pulled his child out, probably using the decision as an excuse. Most parents were pleased, however. The point to be learned was that even though the announcement was made carefully (by letter in the spring) and supported by John Carroll's research that "aptitude equals rate of learning," and even though we know that, given time, students can learn difficult concepts, not enough lead time and information had been given to allay the basic human reaction against change of any kind.

Communication is what it is all about. Educators, for a variety of reasons, have earned the distrust of their constituencies. The fear that their children might be guinea pigs for a failure is tremendous among parents. I have learned that in explaining our program, I seek out the safe words. I talk about "back-to-

basics" and about the power of the one-room schoolhouse as a model of the importance of school scale. Ultimately, however, as our school has now grown from the 71 students of 1984 to the 350 of today, I realize that communicating effectively with our parents and students is becoming even more critical. Because of the intimacy of the small school there was greater trust. As we have grown, and the relationships are less intimate, there is less trust.

We made huge strides in those early years, but now we must employ more sensitivity and sophistication as we seek to continue to refine and improve the educational experience of our students. I am now in year eleven, and the experience has been fantastic. The stresses have been great but so, too, have been the rewards. And being a part of this national effort has given even greater significance to our accomplishments in our very little pond.

Mary Burke has been head of Whitfield School since 1984.

Every educator has a story, a series of events or a single epiphany which compelled him or her to the field. Beyond that, every school leader undoubtedly faced a time when the call to lead, to shape, to organize, to clarify, and to exercise vision yielded the impetus to switch venues. From that point, growing into the role of school leadership appears to be a lifelong process, at least among the more effective leaders. Mary Burke's reflections on her earliest days in teaching are as evocative as her discussion of the implementation of reform at Whitfield School. Who she was, where she has come from, and what she has done all shed light on the "here and now." Paralleling Burke's story, Joan Connolly tells hers.

Joan Connolly
O'Maley Middle School, Gloucester, Massachusetts

When I was nineteen years old, I got on a bus in Park Street Station in downtown Boston for a long ride to Atlanta, Georgia. I was going to a training session for college students who were going to work in several southern states doing voter registration in the summer of 1965. After that summer, I knew

that my life's work was to serve as an institutional change agent in some capacity. My work in rights led naturally to protesting the war in Vietnam and to supporting causes on behalf of peace and nonviolence. The second wave of the women's movement was then gaining momentum, and my energies were drawn to that as well. My first "real" job was as a counselor working with gangs in Somerville, Massachusetts. I loved the work but, frustrated to see so many kids so distanced from the educational system, I began to look for work in education.

I went to work in public schools in 1972 when I took a seventh/eighth-grade guidance counselor position in a junior high. I frequently dealt with students who were disenfranchised and alienated from the educational process. They frustrated and frequently angered teachers and administrators because of their inability to follow the norms and cherish the values of the mainstream.

The schools in which I worked in the seventies and early eighties carefully tracked students based on the scores students received on their yearly Otis Lennon IQ tests, the administration and scoring of which was my responsibility as a school counselor. No one questioned the validity of these tests, nor the effects that the resulting grouping of students had on those kids for the rest of their lives. No one wondered why the children in the "bottom" groups exhibited more behavioral problems and experienced more failure than their peers in the "higher" group. No one searched for a more creative response to this dilemma than retaining those who failed in the same grade for more of the same.

There was no real forum in those schools in which professionals could meet together to discuss issues and problem-solve as colleagues. There was friendly talk in the faculty lunchroom, but when the bell rang, teachers returned to their classrooms and closed the doors.

As a school counselor, I had to be very careful not to cross invisible but clearly understood lines. I could not suggest that a student's adjustment problems might be the fault of the structure of the school program, and most certainly I could not suggest that the teacher might change his or her approach in an effort to reach out to the child.

As I think back on my early years in public education, I realize that by necessity, I operated in somewhat of an underground manner. There was a small group of us who knew that the schools needed to change in order to engage the students. In order to keep our jobs, we could not outwardly challenge those who were

in charge at that time. But the years passed, we stayed with the work, and now some of us are "in charge." The responsibility of reforming public education rests firmly on our shoulders.

I have been an administrator in several different public schools since 1982. In the summer of 1992, I was hired to be principal of the O'Maley Middle School in Gloucester, Massachusetts. This was my third principalship. The interview committee was very clear about the fact that they were looking for a veteran administrator and one who was familiar with school reform initiatives, especially the Coalition of Essential Schools. When I was hired, I was told by both the chair of the search committee and the superintendent of schools that one of my major responsibilities would be to support and facilitate the growth of the Coalition initiative at the school. Based on this initial experience with the school system, I assumed that there was some kind of broad-based support for the idea of change and some understanding of how long real change takes. I made an error in assuming either of these things.

What I found, instead, was that although the majority of the school committee wanted to see general improvement at the O'Maley School, they had no inkling of what the Coalition philosophy was about. Consequently, they had no understanding of the enormity of the changes that had to occur, nor of the communitywide commitment that this change would require. Driven by concern that parents were still taking their children out of O'Maley and sending them to nearby suburban Manchester-by-the-Sea under Massachusetts' school choice law, the school committee wanted primarily to see an immediate increase in standardized test scores. This was hardly a firm foundation on which to build reform. Moreover, the committee did not understand the need for a stable staff. We did many hours of staff development with a group of teachers, and then they either lost their jobs altogether or were transferred to other schools because of bumping.

In spite of many difficulties, O'Maley School has grown tremendously over the last four years. In the past, parents dreaded the time when their sons and daughters had to leave the security of their neighborhood schools and move on to O'Maley. The school had earned the reputation of being a wild and disorderly place, where drug use was frequent and where not much learning took place. Parents felt alienated from the administrators and some of the staff; they felt unwelcome in the building.

Six years ago, the school community began the transition from being a junior high to becoming a middle

school. This change served as a natural backdrop for the beginning of the conversation about the Common Principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools. In order to implement the nine principles, we had to work on changing the image of the school from that of a place to tolerate and survive to that of a community of teachers and learners where students and parents are equal partners in the educational process.

Over time, and through the process of studying and learning together, teachers have developed a common language with which to talk about their teaching which allows them to discuss their work in an understandable, nonthreatening manner. They are enthusiastic about visiting each others' classrooms for observation, feedback, and suggestions.

In order for real learning to take place, I believe that the tone in the school must be as relaxed as possible. Two years ago we changed from a seven-period day to a three-period block schedule. There is much less movement in the building and, therefore, less opportunity for negative interactions among students hurrying to get to class on time in a harried and frantic mode. Students and teachers have made the adjustment very easily and find themselves much more engaged in the work than in clock watching.

I believe that humor is an absolutely necessary component of a school. In fact, I think that there is no way that a teacher can exist in a middle school without having a highly developed sense of humor. If I don't see a teacher smiling most of the time, I know that there is something wrong and children do, too. Last year a seventh-grader was discussing one of his teachers with me. "I don't think that she is having a very good time here," he said. "I think that she is waiting for the day to hurry up and get over so that she can have a better time at home."

I have a button that I wear sometimes that says: "No whining." This makes some people feel uncomfortable (usually those who have been doing a lot of whining!). It is very important to me that all adults in the school share in making decisions and are then responsible for doing what has been decided. This has been hard for some teachers at O'Maley. One person told me a few years ago, "I liked it the way it used to be. The principal told you what to do and then yelled at you if you didn't do it." Some teachers at O'Maley had gotten into the habit of not taking part in any decision making and then complaining about decisions that others made.

During the last four years at O'Maley, I have been able to encourage about 10 percent of the staff that

they would probably have a better time working somewhere else. I do not believe that major changes can happen in a school if the negative and unenthusiastic teachers are allowed to drag others down. Through some early retirements and transfers, we have been able to hire a number of positive-thinking teachers who are helping to move change forward. They know that their continued employment rests on their willingness to work very hard and to become leaders. The appearance of new faces on a staff that had remained static for many years serves as a signal to some of the veterans that none of us is irreplaceable. Education is changing, and all educators must change as well or else there are hundreds of men and women waiting to take their places.

All staff hired at O'Maley are now hired by a committee of staff and parents. It took some time to convince people that they could trust this process. Some kept thinking that if my candidate did not receive the support of the group, I would reverse their decision. They now trust that this could never happen. Parents sit on these teams as equal partners in the work. That was hard at first for some of the teachers, but the trust is growing. The Coalition work is really the glue that holds the team together when there is conflict or mistrust about something.

The staff is doing ongoing work with students to empower them as well. When I first came to O'Maley, I was bothered by the silence in the classrooms. Desks were lined up in rows and the teacher was frequently lecturing from the front of the class. There was little opportunity for students to question or challenge. This has changed. Because teachers are co-teaching during the day and studying together after school, they are aware of other classroom strategies that work better for communication and learning. There is much more group work where students can exchange ideas and problem-solve together. Teachers and students are talking more and sharing classroom decisions about goals, expectations, issues, and topics to be studied.

For the last three years, small groups of teachers have been able to go to Brown University during the summer for training in Coalition work, team building, and integrated curriculum. They have gone with the understanding that they will be responsible for designing the staff development days during the next school year. This has been extremely effective. The staff has been very open to learning from colleagues, frequently more open than if the presenters were "outside experts."

During the last four years, there have been major changes in all of the curriculum areas at O'Maley. Every teacher in the school has been involved in looking at the subjects that they teach from the perspectives of how they measure against national, state, and local standards, how they relate to what we want children to know when they leave O'Maley School, and how subjects integrate with each other. This work has been tedious and challenging and has resulted in a list of simple and meaningful outcomes that each student should have success in realizing. Moreover, work has been done in some areas to achieve a smooth transition for students as they enter and exit O'Maley.

The latter task has been frustrating due to a number of factors. O'Maley School is truly in the middle of the educational scene in Gloucester. Students come to us from five elementary schools, each of which has its own philosophy, curriculum, and ways of doing business. The students leave us to enter a very traditional comprehensive high school where they are tracked and sorted in ways that are unfamiliar to them (but to which they quickly become accustomed). I believe that when change happens in an individual school in a district and that change is not part of an overall vision for the town or city, it will become difficult to hold on to that change. Although principals are the most important people in the change process of schools, there also need to be people in central office positions who understand and stand for reform.

Because of this belief, last spring I began to look for a position as an assistant superintendent. I interviewed in several places, making it very clear who I was and what I stood for. I was hired and started in a new position in another district in March. My dream is to return to Gloucester as superintendent. That dream may or may not be realistic, but we'll see. In the meantime, O'Maley School teachers are aggressively searching for a new principal who will support them in their work for change. There are some people, of course, who are working to curtail the changes, but they are not realizing much success at all. The nine Common Principles of the Coalition of Essential Schools are firmly rooted in the school community and are helping to sustain people and keep them on track.

Joan Connolly was principal of O'Maley Middle School from 1992 to 1994. She is now Assistant Superintendent in the Winthrop, Massachusetts, Public Schools.

IV

AGAINST THE ODDS

Evelyn Lucero
Hollenbeck Middle School, East Los Angeles, California

My story begins the summer of 1987 when I went with two friends to Peru, the Amazon, Cusco, Macchu Picchu—a dream of mine since I studied this area in the sixth grade. The day after my return, I received a phone call asking me if I would be willing to accept the position of principal at Hollenbeck Middle School in East Los Angeles. I hesitated somewhat before saying okay. I had heard about Hollenbeck; all the news was very negative. It was a "problem school."

I was asked to report within the hour at my new region superintendent's office to meet with her and my immediate supervisor. I spent about an hour with them while they told me about all the problems that I would encounter in my new assignment and about how they would support me in my efforts.

My first view of Hollenbeck was as I followed my immediate supervisor to the campus. The school was in its last stages of renovation. As we began to walk around the school, stepping around ladders and construction equipment and looking at the general disarray caused by renovation efforts, my supervisor told me that internally the school was as chaotic as its physical appearance. I saw graffiti everywhere, hundreds of broken liquor bottles, corners with defecation, and at least one door jam that had been ruined from the acidity caused by its being used regularly as a urinal. He informed me I had a tough job on my hands. Upon further study of the above through conversations with key staff and community members, I discovered the following conditions:

- an inner-city school of 2,340 students with a 98 percent Hispanic population in East Los Angeles, an area with a very high crime rate
- families new to this country, many illegal aliens unfamiliar with this country's educational system and never formally educated; students who speak only Spanish or who are struggling in English (60

percent LEP [limited English proficient], of whom six hundred were learning English for the first time)

- students from fourteen gangs; students who are too familiar with violence and who brought weapons each day to protect themselves from the threat of violence both at and on the way to and from school
- tremendous poverty and feelings of hopelessness
- students who lived in four public housing projects, apartments above factories on Skid Row, small hotels, and single family dwellings
- students with very low academic skills; apathetic teachers
- children of children, children from dysfunctional families
- an out-of-control school where staff members feared for their safety and to which parents and sixth-grade teachers feared sending students
- a school which lacked leadership and direction.

First Things First

All these facts raised concerns. I would have to deal with many of them before we could proceed with reform. Many have been conquered; others continue to this day and have made instructional reform very difficult.

I had been warned that Hollenbeck was a very troubled school: gang violence, low test scores, students coming and going as they pleased, little discipline, low expectations for students, an impersonal environment, students running wild through the halls, and even hall fires! Everyone was waiting for a catastrophe to occur. I knew that a veteran principal with thirteen years of experience had refused the assignment. He had stated that it would take a good five years to turn the school around, and he did not want to spend his last years before retirement with that task.

I had spent the previous ten years as an assistant principal in my district before receiving the Hollenbeck assignment. I had been an assistant principal at the small Opportunity School for Girls in Ramona (100 students); at a large, urban year-round junior high school, Gage (2,600 students); and at two comprehensive high schools—one with many affluent students (Marshal High) and another whose students were

middle-class and upper-lower-class (Wilson High). In addition, I had worked in two central offices, as director of secondary bilingual programs and in personnel where I developed innovative programs to attract teachers to hard-to-staff fields.

At Hollenbeck, I found all the school's clerks had been placed temporarily in a vacated home economics classroom along with the principal. The school's mainframe computer was disconnected, as was the school's large photocopy machine, "Big Bertha." They were in a storage area. The first thing I had to do was make provision for the transfer of temporary bungalows to house the administrative offices and for the connection of these two critical pieces of equipment.

One of the next things I did was to ask summer staff if they knew of a staff member who would be willing to be in charge of graffiti abatement and who could work with a group of students in a sort of club. Immediately I was referred to a counselor at our school, a Pied Piper of sorts. When I asked him if he would be willing to start a club to tackle graffiti (I wanted my students to be part of the graffiti solution, to give them a sense of ownership for our school's appearance), he agreed and went on to do wonderful things for students and for our graffiti abatement program. His group soon received press coverage for their efforts. Eventually we would win beautification awards for having a clean, attractive campus.

I recall that when my supervisor and the supervisor in charge of renovations walked the school with me for the first time, they pointed out all the items that were unfinished and needed tending to before the start of school in two weeks. I also had to become acquainted with my administrative staff, who were soon on board. Two of my assistant principals were satisfactory, while the other two had serious shortcomings.

Coming to Grips

Much of my time those two weeks before school opened was spent trying to develop a sense of mission in the key staff members around me. I had to make them want to share in this great adventure we were all about to undertake. Everyone, including custodians, campus aides, teacher assistants, clerks, and administrators, all genuinely had to feel that they had a critical role to play in this undertaking. Everyone seemed to understand how important this year would be in the history of the school and in the lives of the students and staff members.

It was a remarkable time for all of us. Much time was spent in meetings developing strategies and planning for the opening of school and for the procedures and policies which would have to be put in place to ensure a quiet, organized, and effective opening. I even called on key staff members at Wilson High to lend a hand. I also had to borrow a portable microphone from Wilson, since on some days our bell system was not operable, and we certainly did not have a public address system. Now when I think back over those few weeks, it seems almost impossible to have done so much in so little time. Some days I was at work at 4:00 a.m., keyed-up, trying to prepare the school in time for the opening. The adrenaline was flowing. We all felt excited; it was a race with the clock.

A number of strange things occurred during this time. Before the school year I had occasion to see the associate superintendent at a regional reception. He had been responsible for my assignment. He told me that Hollenbeck was at rock bottom and that it could only get better. I felt a tremendous weight, a huge responsibility, had been put on my shoulders. At my first region administrators' meeting, fellow principals came to me to express their condolences at my assignment and proceeded to tell me their own horror stories in connection with my new school. Through the grapevine I was told that I had not been done a favor. The school had been an embarrassment to the district. They believed that with my ten years of experience as an assistant principal and my reputation for being tough, fair, energetic, and hardworking, I had a good chance of being able to do something and even survive this impossible assignment.

As time went on, I grew to believe that another reason I was given this job was because the powers-that-be felt that my being Hispanic would make my assignment palatable with the community. The school had a reputation for having a strong union—a union which took pride in having driven out the last female Hispanic principal. Both the union and the community claimed responsibility for the removal of my predecessor, a male Hispanic.

It was quite exciting the day before school opened—electricians were connecting bells, installing clocks, and screwing on toilet paper dispensers. I would never want to go through that experience again. Fortunately, I was almost seven years younger at that time; I had tons of energy, was very positive, and felt that I could overcome just about anything. Thank goodness this proved true.

I felt very optimistic. I was tired of being someone else's assistant, never able to do what I really would

like with a school. Here was my chance to be in charge and get something done. I would have the opportunity to try different strategies and programs. This school needed improvement in every area imaginable. A close friend, familiar with the situation, warned me that this school would require that I put my personal life on hold for five years. Since I was single, this was not good news.

Establishing Order

During those days, I realized that discipline and supervision would be the very first things I would have to work on. Teaching and learning cannot happen if people are in fear for their safety. I would have to convince staff that the campus was now under control, kids would no longer be allowed to run the school, order would prevail. The principal would, in fact, be in charge of the school and would not allow individuals to "do their own thing."

I had never worked in a school where supervision and discipline were the paramount issues, so I was all ears when a good friend told me about a system of supervision she had encountered at one of her high school assignments. With this plan the perimeter of the school would be secured as well as the campus. I received permission from central office to pull all my teacher assistants out of the classroom for two months and assign them to posts all over campus to ensure that order would prevail. The high school students would not use our campus as a shortcut, our students would not come and go at will, and teachers would not regularly dismiss their classes fifteen minutes early. I put in a rush order for yellow security jackets for all those on duty to heighten their visibility and act as a deterrent. I also began the necessary paperwork to hire campus aides to secure our campus regularly so that the teacher assistants could return to their jobs in the classroom.

Every student was in class by 8:15 a.m. the first day of the fall semester. This was considered by staff members to be a miracle. The counselors presented me with a bouquet of flowers for the accomplishment. In the past, school would start off with several hundred students in the auditorium waiting to receive class schedules. My supervisor came by that morning and was surprised that everything was running so smoothly and efficiently. Later that week I heard that the biggest fear among teachers was that somehow I would leave and everything would revert back to hell. (Maintenance men had previously nicknamed the school

Hell-'n'-Back due to the unparalleled graffiti, destruction of the plant, and the destruction of their equipment by students during the repair trips to our school.)

That first year I was busy trying to get procedures organized and set a professional tone. I had to make sure that monies were spent legally, write up teachers guilty of child abuse, get staff members to do their jobs satisfactorily, and try to fill critical positions with qualified staff. I had to have a teacher arrested who came to back-to-school night with his sweats on backwards and inside out. He was drunk and disorderly and was not treating visiting parents and students with the respect due them. I also had to encourage those unwilling to do their job correctly to leave by transfer, voluntary displacement, or retirement. Many of these people made my life hell. It was them or me, but I was determined I would survive, and I did.

Facing Innumerable Hurdles

From my very first school day I had problems. Too many adults were deeply invested in maintaining the status quo. They saw me as the problem and became determined to rid themselves of me. They charged me with all kinds of things and said I was guilty of human rights violations, which included not signing an illness leave application the day it was put on my desk, the third day of the fall semester. I also made the librarian work in a library which had a new rug and new paint. I had worked hard to have the maintenance men complete work on the library so that it would be ready when the librarian reported to work that fall. In turn, she charged that I was guilty of giving her blood poisoning and lifelong nerve damage. The charges went on and on. I spent my first Christmas vacation at Hollenbeck responding in written form to my boss regarding the charges seven teachers levied against me. Fortunately for me, two of them left at the end of my first semester—a transfer and an illness leave. As it turned out, the librarian was healthy and working in a school down the road the following semester.

Many staff members had to be disciplined that year for child abuse, drunkenness, misappropriation of funds, leaving work hours early without permission, theft of district equipment, leaving students unsupervised in the classroom or out on the field, chronic absences, or tardiness to work. This did not make me a popular person to some, so they wrote to their union president asking that I be replaced. I remained. I was able to encourage a number of teachers to retire or request transfers. It appeared that the majority of the

problems at the school were caused by adults who did not want to do a good job. Many felt the school was an employment agency and that it was enough that they were willing to drive to the ghetto each morning and spend the day with poor children. What more could we want? This same performance had always been acceptable in the past. No one had ever bothered to write them up formally.

Sometimes I felt a bit frightened knowing that some of my teachers would do almost anything to get rid of me. I often feared violence against my person, and at times I felt that some were trying to break me emotionally and psychologically. I was amazed at the end of the year when I went for a physical to find that nothing was wrong with me, although I had begun to gain weight because of the stress.

I had four administrators assigned to my school, the usual number for a school this size. By the beginning of the second semester, I had had the two incompetents replaced. In fact, the assistant principal in charge of discipline was replaced at the end of the first month on the job. The second one to go had been here many years. An older gentlemen who spent his day drinking coffee and chatting with community members, he was in charge of the plant and activities. Teachers were frustrated because they would send him many notes regarding maintenance needs, but nothing would ever get taken care of. At the end of my first semester, I told my boss to get this man out of my school—that I preferred to be short-handed than have him around. His mere presence caused problems. I was sent an experienced Black gentlemen about whom I felt very optimistic; however, he was only at our school one day. One influential community member decided that the existing Black administrator at our school was more than enough. The district sent me a white male administrator who had asked for a transfer because his life had been threatened when he cornered a student. He was not happy with this new assignment. I heard that he did not like the idea of working for a female, especially not a female who also happened to be Hispanic. Oh, well! However, he was very effective in getting the plant under control. He was able to get things fixed, which made teachers happy, and I knew I did not have to worry about maintenance; the school was well cared for.

Ongoing Trials

My supervisor gave me the name Woman of Steel when I survived a terrible experience my first year: A thirteen-year-old male student fell down a twelve-foot electrical shaft. On a Monday in April around

12:40 p.m., the young boy was playing with a friend. He was outside the building, knocking on the door, trying to frustrate the hall monitor on duty inside. I later was told that he was running from the building door to a fence gate and laughing away with a friend. It seemed that on one trip he ran into the gate quite hard and the gate gave way. He fell twelve feet, landing on his back. I was on yard duty and was called to the area. I had to respond immediately. I had 2,339 other students on campus, many nearby since this was the main eating area, and we were well into lunch period. I had to remove them from the area and have them, as well as staff members, remain calm. My two male assistant principals were down in the hole with the boy when I arrived on the scene. I called the paramedics, my boss, and the district's public information office. It took forty-five minutes for the boy to be removed from the shaft area. I had to handle the media: *The Los Angeles Times* was there after the paramedics and before the hook and ladder truck. It was quite an experience.

This incident also brought to light the fact that our school nurse was physically incapable of helping in this crisis. She walked with a cane and was unable to climb down the ladder to tend to the boy until further help could arrive. When the crisis had passed, I asked that she be replaced with someone more able-bodied.

I was sued by the family, as were the district and the water and power department. The student, who became a paraplegic, had fallen into an area that gave access to the electrical power vault which belonged to the city but was housed at our school. I was sued for $33 million—quite an experience for a rookie principal. Thankfully, I had proof that a good supervision schedule was in force and people were at their posts. However, the bottom line was that a young student was critically injured on my watch. It was a Monday, and since we had been having power outage problems during the renovation of the school that weekend, both water and power workers as well as school district air conditioning men were down in the power vault. It seems that one of the workers had left the gate's two locks unlocked and neither my custodians nor any of my staff members had happened to see that. The case took approximately three years to settle. At one point I had to undergo a five-hour deposition and a trial. In the end, the district settled out of court, paying a precedent-setting amount, close to $3 million. The district was found mostly to blame since the power vault was physically on district property.

The Bigger Task: Nurturing Valuable Teaching and Learning

As a new principal I had to make the school a safe place for students and staff. That was the easier task. I could see that the longer, more difficult task was to make the school a place where quality teaching and learning occurred and in so doing change the reputation of the school.

By the beginning of my second year as a principal, I had thirty-two openings and an opportunity to hire new teachers. Most of my new teachers had never taken a teacher training class and did not possess teaching credentials, so it was left to us to teach them everything: discipline, how to work with a roll book, how to develop lessons, how to work with parents and complete required forms, etc. We became somewhat of a teacher training institute. I decided that my school definitely needed a stronger support network and that it desperately needed to be personalized. How would I ever build a team if faculty members did not know each other?

I began to look outside of the district for solutions and I found a house system and the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES). I came upon the house system by chance during a visit to Atlanta, Georgia, where I was on a panel discussing our Ford Foundation–funded dropout program. After the presentation I was approached by a superintendent from Connecticut, who spoke to me about the fact that their large middle schools are divided into smaller units called houses in order to provide a sense of personalization to students, parents, and staff members. That evening, a second gentleman introduced himself to me, saying that he was from San Diego, where their district had opened up a restructuring office to help schools bring about much-needed reform efforts. He invited me to call a principal of a middle school who was spending the year with a planning grant to develop a house system.

Upon my return to Los Angeles, I spoke to my union leader and to the head of our main advisory council regarding the concept. They agreed that it might be a good solution for our school. I then spoke to the fifteen most respected faculty members. Their response was best expressed by a counselor who had been here for about thirty-seven years. He said, "We have nothing to lose. If the new house plan does not work, we can always go back to our present system, which we know does not work."

I visited Wilson Middle School in San Diego for a day and picked up their ideas. That was an extremely productive day. It gave us the framework for the physical restructuring of our school. Why did I feel we

needed to be restructured? At that time in our district there was no talk of restructuring; however, I sensed that our school suffered from a lack of personalization. There was a real sense of isolation among all staff members. Teachers only knew the last names of people down the hall from them. Some teachers felt very isolated. When I first arrived, I found that the school had no published faculty list with people's first names. I found that really strange. Morale was still low. Also the thirty-two brand new teachers we'd added desperately needed hand-holding. Only one or two of them had teaching credentials. The rest had never even experienced student teaching. They needed lots of assistance, and I needed to develop a structure for our school that would encourage bonding, nurturing, and support.

More Hurdles

That year unfortunately began with a teachers' strike looming over us. Teachers were directed by their union to "slowdown" and not attend any meetings other than faculty meetings. At the semester break, one of my more embittered senior teachers decided to follow the directive of his union and, as a way of undermining the school district, not turn in his roll book. I was then directed to withhold his pay until I received his roll book. This elderly teacher, who walked with a cane, had been in an accident with a train two years previously while he was driving his truck on his way to go fishing after summer school. It seems that the train was at fault and he was suing them. He had become very bitter with life since he now had to walk with the help of a cane and had poor eyesight out of one eye. One day I received a phone call from my supervisor, who told me that this teacher had told his psychiatrist that he planned on killing me for withholding his paycheck. I was told that he would have a hearing. The district found him not well and put him on mandatory illness leave.

The next fall, in October 1989, I received another call that my life was once again being threatened by the same man. Coincidentally, his illness leave, I later learned, was about to run out. I had since learned that he had once gotten in trouble with the law for threatening a young man with a gun during a driving encounter. I had been advised after the first death threat that I should have requested a restraining order earlier that year, so this time I called the district's legal office to request such an order. One day as I was preparing for work, I received a call from my boss telling me not to report to work that morning but

instead to report to district headquarters. I complied. I met with my boss, the associate superintendent, and a gentleman in charge of a special district police unit. I was told that the board of education had decided to request a restraining order for me and twenty-four-hour bodyguard service for a week. It was a strange experience. Starting that morning I had an around-the-clock bodyguard. One would park outside my home all night and bring me to work each morning. Each evening I would be driven home. On back-to-school night my bodyguard assigned for that part of the day would walk with me around the school as I visited classrooms. The eeriest aspect was having the police cars parked 'round-the-clock in my neighborhood. When this procedure began, they introduced themselves to my neighbors so that they would not be frightened. I was glad when the service ended.

I continued with the reform of that year—the house system. In March 1989, committee members encouraged their peers to agree that we undertake the implementation of a house system at our school. One teacher who had worked here for twenty-one years stood up and told his peers, "Before I die I want to say I gave my best shot at making a difference." There was consensus in the room, but because it was a strike year, we had to allow a week in which information and research would be made available to teachers. That week ended with a formal vote: teachers voted eighty-four in favor, thirty-two opposed.

Exploring the Coalition of Essential Schools

During my first February at Hollenbeck, I had happened to find myself in New York City at an urban middle-school pregnancy prevention meeting. I had an afternoon free and asked if anyone knew of a progressive secondary school in the city that I could visit. I was directed to Central Park East Secondary School, where I spent a few hours visiting classes and collecting literature that the principal had available.

I returned to Los Angeles and read through the information on the Coalition. A year later I attended a day conference at the University of California at Irvine and met Judy Codding, the featured speaker. I shared with Judy my plans to divide my school into houses in order to personalize it. She told me about *Horace's Compromise*. I returned to my school with the idea of exposing my teachers to the Coalition's Principles as a tool for turning the school around instructionally. That spring I took my newly chosen house leaders to the first Coalition Forum at the University of Southern California. As an outgrowth, we

sent four teachers that summer to the Coalition's first two-week training at Gahr High and Pasadena High. The teachers who underwent the training implemented the ideas learned in their classrooms and encouraged me to make the training available to their peers.

For the next two years I found money to send all interested staff to the trainings that were available locally. One summer, during a two-week training, my teachers spent a week at Pasadena High working on curriculum development. They returned to work in September feeling very enthusiastic about what they had learned and excited about Michael Goldman, who had instructed them during the second week.

During that year, in conversations with the Coalition coordinator at the University of Southern California, I asked to get acquainted with the consultant that my teachers were requesting, Michael Goldman. In the spring I was told that Michael would be consulting at Lincoln Middle School in Santa Monica for a week and that perhaps the principal there might be open to letting us use Michael for part of the week, which is what ultimately happened.

In preparation for Michael's visit, I approached those teachers who had worked with him over the summer and asked them how they would like to use him. They decided that they would like to develop lessons along CES lines and have him visit their classes to observe them as they implemented the lessons. In addition, we decided to videotape them teaching the lesson. Four teachers volunteered to be observed and videotaped.

Michael would begin his two-day visit with us by working with the teachers who were the most excited and who were the most advanced in their training and visiting the classes of the teachers who had volunteered to be observed. As it turned out, the other teachers who would be observed later in the day accompanied Michael to observe their peers. I also went along. This was a very special day, a real turning point for all of us. It was quite an experience for these teachers to have about seven people in their classrooms, plus a teacher assistant who was operating the video camera. After each observation we went to our conference room, played back the video, and listened as Michael debriefed the teacher on classroom performance. All day long we visited, taped, and debriefed. Then we met together and decided how Michael would approach our faculty the following day when he would be making a two-hour presentation, "An Introduction to the Coalition."

Michael was introduced to our entire faculty by one of their colleagues, who was on the forefront of our involvement with the Coalition, the late Rudy Montoya. Rudy's integrity and the credibility he had with staff as someone who was truly student-centered were invaluable. He sincerely believed that our students desperately needed this kind of instruction, and he was very committed to making sure that as many teachers as possible would come on board. Those of us with a vested interest in his success all held our breath and prayed that it would go well. Following this presentation Michael spent the afternoon providing a workshop for teachers who had some knowledge of the Coalition through conferences or summer workshops during previous years.

Ongoing Guidance

All in all those were two days that were very well spent. We all felt exhilarated and ready to move forward in bringing the Coalition to more of our staff members. At that point teachers came to lobby me. They wanted us to spend whatever funds we might have available to hire Michael Goldman as our school's coach. Our goal would be to have him help us spread the Common Principles to all classrooms. We used state money from our school improvement program and wrote our first independent contract with Michael Goldman that spring. The contract stated that he would visit the next school year for approximately eighteen days.

Michael began his work that fall once things settled down after the opening of the first semester. During visits, he would work for two full days with a group of teachers who had no previous knowledge of the Coalition's nine Common Principles. While we relieved those teachers of all their teaching responsibilities so that they would be free to involve themselves fully in these new concepts, we called for substitutes and used either Chapter 1 or school improvement funds to pay them. Michael used those days to teach our teachers as much as he could in two days about essential questions, backwards planning, authentic assessment, and habits of mind. He would also have them develop a lesson incorporating the various concepts and strategies taught to them. Michael used this same method of training until everyone who volunteered had been trained. All new administrators and counselors were also put through this training so they would be able to support our teaching staff members and understand the concepts involved,

including tone of decency and the philosophy behind the use of our funding sources. During his return visits, he checked in with teachers he had previously taught to observe them as they attempted to implement these strategies with their students. In addition, he worked with our more advanced teachers, taking them as far as they were able or willing to go.

Next Step: CES Membership

We kept up our staff development method until over half of our teachers had volunteered to receive two days of training or more. At this point, spring 1992, those of us who felt strongly about including everyone in the training decided to have a group of teachers approach the entire faculty. During a regular faculty meeting, five teachers asked their peers to consider having our school apply for membership in CES. After those teachers spoke to the faculty about why we should apply for membership, they put it to a vote. When the ballots were tallied, the overwhelming majority were either highly in favor of membership or willing to not get in the way of their peers who wanted to apply for membership and adopt these new instructional strategies. That spring a small committee wrote up our application and submitted it to the Coalition.

The next September (1992), we returned to work and began training everyone, including our teacher assistants and a few parents. The majority of parent training had to be done by teachers due to the fact that most of our parents only speak Spanish. We needed then—and still need—to do more work so that parents truly feel that they are our partners in this endeavor.

The next month we learned that our school had been accepted as a member of CES. We were very happy. Later that semester three of our teachers applied to become Citibank Faculty members. Our social studies department chair was selected. She went to Brown University that February for a week and returned in the summer to team-teach at the Brown Summer High School.

In December 1992, I applied to become a Thomson Fellow and was accepted. Then, in February 1993, I went to Brown University for a week of training. I met eleven other Thomson Fellows who came from all over the country, from small private schools to large urban public schools. I soon had eleven new friends who understood what it means to try to implement instructional reform through the nine Common

Principles. That July, I was at Brown for seven days of intensive training in many areas, including consensus building, instructional leadership, and the change process. This May will I go to Newport, Rhode Island for a seminar with Seymour Sarason on the change process, and in the summer I will return to Brown for four more days of training.

At our school the training proceeded. We soon could see that it would be never-ending since one of our big problems is faculty turnover. Some of our very best trained teachers have left us: one due to AIDS, another to begin a doctoral program, another to tend to a sick father. This very semester, four teachers are leaving to earn more money at the high school, which recently became a year-round school that can offer them more pay. Moreover, I have encouraged teachers who refuse to adopt reform to leave.

As an inner-city middle school, we always have some "no control" items in the system. One is that we are forced to hire teachers who do not hold credentials. We then have to spend their first year with us teaching the simple rudiments of teaching. Sometimes it is extremely hard, almost impossible, to encourage someone new on board to get excited about the nine Common Principles right away. They feel overwhelmed with all that there is to teaching. But then again, sometimes this very innocence, newness, idealism makes them ready, willing, and very eager to jump on board the Coalition train because they have a strong desire to do what is best for students; they have nothing to unlearn, and they have no ego involvement in past successes.

Our coach, Michael Goldman, has helped our houses feel empowered by helping them to develop their house vision, house habits of mind, essential skills, and areas of knowledge. This has helped each house feel unique and strong. Each house has been working at its own pace to bring its teachers along, lending a helping hand when necessary and calling on our coach to help them work through obstacles. We have spent a great deal of money on substitutes to release our teachers for training and curriculum development and on our independent contracts so we can have a coach.

Overcoming Obstacles: A New Hollenbeck Emerges

There have been so many obstacles to overcome, but we have overcome most of them. The biggest problems have to do with adults and their egos and agendas. Sometimes jealousy rears its ugly head: Who

is going to be the "expert"? What direction should we take? In my first years my biggest headaches came from union members who resisted the house system. We had a formal vote in March, but when teachers returned from a three-week strike later that semester, the union chapter chair tried to say that we had never voted for a house system. Thank goodness a group of teachers decided to fight her and sent a special-delivery letter to the union president, superintendent, and school board president with more signatures than the letter calling for the end of our house system.

One of the things that really made the Coalition work at our school was the fact that some of the more ardent early believers also happened to be strong union members. Their credibility with peers and their reputation for being strong individualists and good teachers helped move the Coalition agenda. Once union members understood that what we were proposing was just good teaching, no one who was student-focused could fight it, and those who were, did not feel they could openly fight it. The nine Common Principles have given our school a very sound instructional focus that everyone can buy into. It is the glue that holds our school together.

Having an outside coach has helped us tremendously these last three years. Fortunately, the coach comes and goes, does not get caught up in unions or district politics, and thus is free to spend all his energy and time just working on instructional strategies and on helping teachers make progress. Because he is nonevaluative, teachers do not feel threatened by him. He also has no other duty to keep him from his work—no yard duty, no unexpected crisis to take him off track.

Michael has been able to develop an easy rapport with staff members. We work very closely together. I ask for input from our house leaders for the direction they believe their house members need. Probably one of the greatest rewards of having a coach is that his very presence forces all of us to refocus on instruction when we could so easily be led away from our goal with all the crazy, urgent needs screaming at us. Having our coach visit helps keep us on line and truthful to our purpose. He has almost become a member of our staff.

We have come to a place now where all faculty members understand that full implementation of the Coalition's nine Common Principles is our school's goal and mission. Everyone understands that instructional excellence and student academic empowerment will be the fulfillment of our school's vision.

My life has never been boring these past seven years. I either am coming up with a new idea to help our school which requires lots of persuasion, or I find myself in the center of a controversy which was not of my doing—usually started by the community and parents who like to see themselves as the change agents for the district in regard to the rights of parents. Many of their missions are started at one of our seemingly innocuous monthly parent advisory council meetings. I never know what to expect. These unplanned ventures on the part of our community have always managed to keep us all on our toes. How do you keep the parents on your side and at the same time not alienate your superiors?

I have come to the conclusion that some community leaders are individuals who are unfulfilled in their personal lives and who decide to make a mark in life by threatening and manipulating senators, board members, superintendents, and principals—individuals who have more formal education and more prestige. I feel bad that these few vocal persons are able to manipulate the majority of parents who come to our meetings uneducated, new to the country, often illegal, and unfamiliar with this country's educational system or the politics of the district.

The result is that stands are often taken which profit adults and hurt students. It is always painful to experience this and yet be at a loss as to how to stop it. Unfortunately, many of our school's parents lack education and do not understand the value and importance of a good education in this country. In fact, I think one of the biggest problems in the administration of our school is that the majority of parents are poor and lack understanding of the system.

Earlier this year I became fed up with the politics and disloyalty on the part of two key staff members and asked to be reassigned, but when I looked at the long way we have come in almost seven years, reviewed all our successes, considered my wonderfully supportive and qualified staff, and looked at my teacher roster which includes 70 percent whom I've hand selected, leaving becomes almost impossible. How long would it take to bring another school to this point? Many of us feel that we are on the brink of something spectacular at our school. Can we pull it off? What will it take to get us to that point? How good a school can Hollenbeck become with all that works against our being successful? How much longer can I personally withstand pressures exerted on me?

Going in I knew it would be hard, but I never dreamed how difficult. It takes everything I ever learned

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and everything in me—all my time, all my energy, all my courage to survive and be successful, more successful than anyone ever anticipated. But I would never do it again, and I would never wish my experiences here to be visited upon anyone I care for. It has been too hard for any one person. This school has asked too much. Some days it took everything in me and more to return to work. I guess I could have asked to be moved when I received the two death threats, or I could have requested disability for stress, or I could simply have asked to be transferred, but I have stuck it out these seven years.

Our school has received very little local support or recognition. Just about everything had to be done alone, with only the assistance of those immediately around me: clerks, coordinators, administrators, counselors, teachers, supervision aides, teacher assistants, cafeteria workers—all those who had a vested interest in the success of the school and who shared in the dream, the dream that one day our school would be a model neighborhood school. It would not just be the best junior high in East Los Angeles, but the very best in the city.

Most of the recognition we have received has been from outside the district. In 1992, for instance, President Reagan's Secretary of Education, Lamar Alexander, spent one afternoon shadowing me and interviewing me. I was also interviewed extensively by President Clinton's Transition Team regarding educational reform. We served as a visitation site for the California League of Middle Schools and for hundreds of educators from all over the country who were interested in reform and innovation. In addition, we were recognized for our work through membership in CES.

On the Nature of Change

Change is a difficult process; it is so unique to the individual. I believe it has to do with where people find themselves in their lives. Hesitation to change sometimes has to do with age, fear, personal satisfaction, timidity, lack of the capacity to understand the change, or the fact that some people are overwhelmed in their personal lives and just cannot deal with one more thing.

Once in a while I have come upon a teacher who is just dying to do something new and exciting, ready to take on a challenge; such teachers run ahead of the pack and jump in with both feet. The respect with which they are held by their peers has made them the ones to really sell these ideas. Their colleagues

notice how rejuvenated they are about their work with their students and want to be part of the same program. This has really helped our school.

Other times I come across teachers who believe in the ideas, but who have to look and think a lot before taking the next step. They are my turtles, slow but sure. They, too, have sold the ideas to their peers based upon their credibility. The fact that the nine Common Principles just speak to good teaching is what has made it easier for me. Educators who desperately want to reach children can readily believe in the concepts since none of them are really new.

As an instructional leader I am always having to determine when to push, who to push and how hard to push. This ability to make good calls can make or break principals as we attempt to bring about change in our schools. We have to ask, when do we allow democracy to reign and allow teachers to make the calls and when do we take the reigns and make some hard decisions, calling on teachers to be accountable? I presume that success is made up of a combination of both strategies. Much again has to do with timing and knowing in your gut what call to make.

Life and School Leadership: Inevitable Connections

I never told my family anything to cause them worry about my new job. I just let them know that it required a tremendous amount of work on my part. My mother would encourage me not to work too hard. She just wanted me to be happy.

I was the first in our family to go to college. I was the youngest of seven daughters, no sons. My father died of double pneumonia when I was six. At that time we lived in New Mexico, but we had to move to Los Angeles since there was little work in Albuquerque. Soon after we arrived in Los Angeles, I developed polio in my right leg. Fortunately, it was a light case, although my right leg could not hold me up. I spent two weeks in General Hospital, where they took contagious polio patients. I recall that some of my room-mates would be moved to another room only to later find out that they were put in iron lungs or had passed away. I remember not being allowed to drink milk, only water and apple juice. I learned to hate apple juice from then on. The prescribed treatment for my ailment was to be wrapped two or three times a day in hot blanket pieces from head to foot. They would put wool strips into a washing machine with very

hot water and then they would place them on my near-naked body. Those strips were wrapped with pieces of plastic to maintain the heat for as long as possible. I also remember getting spinals regularly. They checked for infection, I guess.

Soon after my return home I was diagnosed as having a crooked spine; my right hip stuck out too much. Because my mother had to work to support us, there was no one at home to care for me, so I was put in Children's Hospital of Los Angeles. I had to lie still on my back; I was tied down with a straitjacket to make sure I wouldn't move. I also underwent lots of physical therapy. When I got better, they moved me to a convalescent home until I was well enough to go to school. I was away from home for about seven months.

I only mention these experiences because years later, in the midst of some of my most horrific days at Hollenbeck, I was asked how I was able to tolerate the abuse, the pressure, the stress that I was forced to undergo. When I told this teacher of my childhood illnesses, she told me that they must have made me strong so that I could survive this school and the personal price that turning it around would require. Perhaps this helped make me strong, as did having a very strong female role model in my mother. She never complained. She worked hard, earning little, but she was able to purchase a home. My mother took us to church, which helped instill a very strong sense of right and wrong. She endured many hardships and heartbreaks, but she survived until age eighty-eight when lung cancer finally dragged her down. Perhaps it was a combination of both. As a young girl with a mother that needs to work, you learn a lot about having to do things by yourself and for yourself.

One of the things that has helped me tremendously is knowing what is morally right. This has helped me to take the necessary stands when it would have been so much easier to give in, take the easy way, and avoid being beaten up for doing the unpopular. What is popular is not always right, and what is right is not always popular. What is ethically, morally correct is usually what is best for children. This has helped me to always be student-centered, not adult-centered. I cannot overemphasize the importance of a strong sense of what is right and what is wrong. It has helped me to make so many decisions—to be decisive.

These seven years have revealed to me that my mother's strength of conviction, courage, sense of morality, and purpose are within me. I learned that I can surmount just about anything. My role as a principal has developed within me very strong leadership skills: decisiveness, focus, the ability to get

people to believe in me and follow me. Since being a principal with a strong vision is sometimes quite lonely, joining the Thomson Fellows has been a marvelous experience for me. It has helped ease some of the isolation and has opened up many opportunities for professional growth. If I had not found the Coalition and brought the program to my school, I would have left years ago.

My district has been so busy these last few years that we have been allowed to find our own way. It would be wonderful if our district supported the Coalition's work, but for us this is not a reality. This has given us the space and time to do our own thing, so we have focused on the nine Common Principles to keep us on our instructional course.

Lingering Frustrations

As the instructional leader, one of my greatest frustrations has been that in my district the principal has no say in the selection of assistant principals. In my seven years as principal at Hollenbeck, I have had eighteen different assistant principals. They ranged from wonderful, dedicated individuals to undermining and disloyal and chronically absent (over fifty days a year) ones. This is why it is critical that the vision of the school be the vision of the principal and why the principal must be the instructional leader. One of the crazier results of collective bargaining last year is that the principal's right to select full-time, out-of-classroom coordinators was taken away and given to the union. It is hard to be held accountable for compliance issues, discipline, and test scores when you have no say over who will be part of your administrative team.

A second frustration as the instructional leader is to realize that some teachers talk the party line but in fact are doing very little. How do you get them to take it all more seriously? How do you keep your school on line and still do the thousand daily chores and attend the mandated meetings? Not easily. Working with individuals while trying to figure each teacher out and learn what will motivate them to improve their performance is quite a task. I am not sure anyone has the answer for the thousands of possibilities. However, I do not plan on giving up in the foreseeable future. So much remains to be done. I just cannot give up on myself or my staff or my school as long as there is hope. Our school is a good place for moving forward with our task. Now, to maintain the momentum!

I believe our faculty is moving in a direction which will be away from the intensive use of a coach. I will

recommend, however, that Michael visit Hollenbeck quarterly to make sure the school remains true to its instructional course. Michael has done great work with our staff, and I will be eternally grateful to him! Our new focus will be on providing our teachers with nuts and bolts—concrete strategies to use in their implementation of the nine Common Principles within their disciplines. The school is planning on sending to the California Projects as many literature, social studies, math, and science teachers as are willing. These one- to four-week intensive workshops stress thematic and interdisciplinary lesson development which is also collaborative in nature. We have had real success in using these projects with a few teachers, as our budget would allow. We now want to use our funds to make these projects available to more teachers.

We are very hopeful. We have a strong sense of where our students need to be, and we feel committed to making that happen. Great challenges offer the greatest rewards. How we meet them reveals the truth in all of us.

Evelyn Lucero was principal of Hollenbeck Middle School from 1987 to 1994. She is now Director of the Migrant Education Program for the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Opposition to reform can wear many faces. At times it can be overt and overwhelming, like what Evelyn Lucero faced both directly and circumstantially from so many sides at Hollenbeck. The degree of tenacity, vision and strength required to overcome such odds is awe-inspiring. Opposition can be more insidious, though, and more divisive. Dick Amman's story is in that vein. As principal in Pueblo County, Colorado, Dick Amman faced his ample share of politics and publics.

Dick Amman
Pueblo County High School, Pueblo County, Colorado

It was mid-May 1991, in Denver, Colorado. Ted Sizer joined Governor Roy Romer on the steps of the state capitol to make an important announcement: Colorado had just become the seventh state to join the Re:Learning network and CES. Most of the dignitaries and school officials who had gathered to listen

welcomed the news, but there were a few in the crowd with a different agenda. I dismissed those few as virtually nonthreatening, as the "fringe folks," who are always present in a large metropolitan area. I mean, how seriously can people be taken who march around with placards that read: "Don't teach our kids to think! Teach them to obey! Teach them facts!"?

I dismissed them, too, because my high school was 120 miles to the south in a small, rural, suburban community in Pueblo. Pueblo County High School had already initiated a reform agenda with the idea that we were going to rid ourselves of the "shopping mall" look in favor of a curriculum and delivery system grounded in the belief that, given sufficient time and support, all students can benefit from the same opportunities and learn well. Our Guaranteed Graduate Diploma, instituted two years earlier, encountered very little resistance. I had no reason to suspect, then, that in the fall of 1991, our efforts to continue the conversation on school reform around the nine Common Principles would create much community concern.

And it didn't, at first. During the 1991–92 and 1992–93 school years, we conducted a series of workshops for students and parents to acquaint them all with the evidence of need for change and to inform them about how Coalition philosophy addressed those needs. Furthermore, we established school committees comprised of staff, students, and parents to identify programs and practices that would serve as vehicles for some of the Coalition Principles. During all of the planning and implementing stages, we always kept out front the notion that Pueblo County High reform committees would interpret the nine Common Principles as they related to the specific needs of our school community. We gave regular progress reports to the community through school newsletters and fliers, and the "old" way of doing things slowly began to peel away.

The minimal resistance we received during those two years came from internal quarters. The teaching staff was comprised of what Rob Evans, of the Human Resource Service in Wellesley, Massachusetts, refers to as a small core group of "red hots" and "cryogenics" balanced by a larger group of "lukewarms." The middle group, of course, responded favorably to the intellectual appeal of the "red hots," but equally favorably to the emotional appeal of the "cryogenics." What tipped the scale in favor of reform was the strong support from the superintendent and five progressive-thinking school board members.

What were those layers of the old onion that began to peel away? Stamping diplomas with the words "college track," "vocational track," and "general track" is a practice that is now history. The school day is no longer divided into six equal chunks of fifty-two minutes each. An advisory period serves as a vehicle for personalization and portfolio development. Technology is used as a tool for interactive learning. Many teachers have moved from covering content as dictated by textbooks to a problem-based approach through essential questions. Socratic seminars are blossoming in the core areas. The bell-shape mentality is slowly being replaced by J-curve thinking. The changes are beginning to manifest themself to the community; but a few—a vocal few—community members are beginning to make noise about the shape of things in our school district and at Pueblo County High School.

Why now? Have the placard holders moved south from Denver? Has the fear demonstrated in Pennsylvania and Virginia migrated to southern Colorado? It goes deeper than that. Our school district covers an area of 1,850 square miles, roughly the size of the state of Rhode Island. The district serves 4,300 students from five separate communities. A small but influential contingent of community members is still burning over the superintendent's successful drive to close two community schools back in 1988 due to declining enrollment and escalating maintenance costs. Another community is showing significant growth, and an attempt to pass a bond to build a new high school in that community was soundly defeated by voters from the other communities. Along with that election we lost one of our most supportive board members because he was in favor of the bond issue. He was defeated narrowly, but he was replaced by a "back-to-basics" advocate who uses the Littleton, Colorado example as his personal call to undo the reform movement in our district. The vocal minority support him and his agenda as an excuse to get even with the superintendent and board members who supported the school closings several years ago.

As of this writing, our innovative and visionary superintendent is almost certain to be named superintendent in a much larger school district in northern Colorado. Our associate superintendent announced his retirement a few weeks ago. In the meantime, the new board member continues to hack away at the changes we have made—for example, by comparing our standardized test scores with those from students of a Colorado Springs high school, located in one of the most affluent neighborhoods of all Colorado. At board meetings he openly states that kids need to know facts, wondering aloud how many of our students

would be able to name the President during the Civil War. When our school was given the okay to implement a school-within-a-school beginning in the fall of 1994, this one board member stated in the press, referring to County High students as "lab rats," that he would personally not allow his children to attend the school.

So where are we now? To extend the board member's metaphor, we are indeed under the microscope. A local TV station's news clip about our small school program, feeding off the frenzy created by the board member's comments in the newspaper, introduced the information as an experiment. A separate but companion newspaper article reported on CES philosophy and quoted from Sizer's works.

I view this attention as positive. As much as we have attempted to communicate with our school community about reform in the past three years, this vocal critic and his small constituency have brought a lot of attention to our efforts. If there is a lesson to be learned here, it is that we have been careful not to be defensive or to react to his negatives with counter-negatives. We have responded with open and honest answers to his questions. We have assured our parents and students that our improvement efforts will be evaluated and measured by parallel traditional and alternate methods. With four other Colorado CES high schools, we have developed baseline data through a series of traditional and nontraditional assessments, and we will continue to do that over the next four years. We have made a commitment to our school board and to our community that we would keep them apprised of the data collection throughout the process.

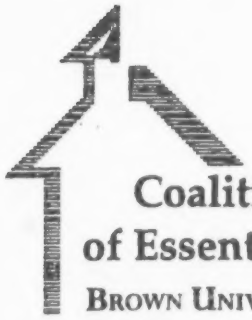
I believe that our credibility is still intact. I believe the credibility of the new board member is being questioned daily. In the balance is the support he has from a vocal minority. With the departure of a supportive superintendent and a renewed scrutiny of the reforms occurring at our high school, there is a double-edged fear beginning to develop: fear that the opposition to change will grow and gain momentum, and fear that immediate results from reform efforts will be on the down-side of the learning curve and erode our credibility. A lot of the fear from both camps, too, is born out of the chaos and conflict that are quite often companions to change.

A rare few exhibit the courage to initiate and sustain the conversations and actions of change and to tolerate and communicate the ambiguity that the process cultivates. If any number of us are going to make a difference in the quality of learning that takes place in our schools, we need to model that courage for

others in the face of all the opposition that comes our way. If someone in a leadership position, such as our superintendent, suddenly leaves the "camp," we can't wring our hands and give up the fight. We don't need to take his position, but we certainly must, from our own positions, demonstrate the courage necessary to effect the changes that our education system so desperately needs.

Let us envision an education system that is supported by placard bearers whose message reads: "Thank you, teachers, for providing a learning environment that stimulates thought and creates good intellectual habits."

Dick Amman has been principal of Pueblo County High School since 1987.



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